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# **BACHELOR THESIS**

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**Henrikke Hammett Havaas**

**Management and strategies for  
reducing stress and burnout in the  
workplace: The effectiveness of  
using yoga program as an exam-  
ple in Human Resource Manage-  
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**2015**

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## **Management und Strategien zur Stress- und Burnoutver- meidung am Arbeitsplatz: Ef- fektivitätssteigerung durch Yoga-Programme im Anwen- dungsbeispiel des Personal- managements**

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## **Abstract**

Recent research has indicated concern for the degree of stress and burnout among employees. This thesis examined the effectiveness of yoga program in improvement to stress and burnout among employees. The aim was to measure effect of yoga program on employees through an empirical study and include other study findings. The result of the study show that yoga program has a significant positive impact on work performance, work motivation, workplace satisfaction, physical wellbeing and mental wellbeing of employees.

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# 1 Introduction

Every day, more and more people are suffering from health problems that cause mental instability. Two of the major health issues that we are facing in our modern society are burnout and stress. These psychological mental syndromes are increasing with a high speed. With the climbing numbers of workplace burnout and stress cases found in newer reports, one might say that this should be regarded as a warning sign for the entire world. Instead of letting this global problem grow any further, we can start applying effective stress management strategies and work against it as a global challenge.

## 1.1 Introduction and background

How pressure and expectations can be handled at work is a well-discussed topic amongst employees today. Competition between co-workers is ever increasing and managers often tend to overload their employees with extra tasks and strict deadlines. It is only a matter of time before the first person in a company is affected by stress and work overload. A stressful workplace environment, combined with being overloaded, often results in employees and managers experiencing serious burnout symptoms. Situations like these do not only affect work performance, but they also challenge the importance of one's wellbeing. There are many factors that need to be taken into consideration when we try to understand some of the main reasons for psychosocial problems in the workplace. An important role player in helping a workplace obtain and keep healthy and satisfied employees, is the profession of Human Resource Management. In an overview written by R. Murphy (1995), job stress influences health-care costs, disability, absenteeism and productivity. This report also indicates the increased number of health problems and performance issues that employees experience due to a stressful work environment.

A research paper done by Dr. Sudhakar and Dr. Sangeetha Vinod (2014) confirms the fact that the negative impacts of psychological problems are currently widespread in organizations. Implementing strategies for effective stress management is a key solution when emotional disorders are a threat for the workforce. Finding the golden way to achieve organizational success can be a difficult task for managers in Human Resource Management departments. Human beings are a complex phenomena and one needs to understand the psychological correlation between our mind and body to provide a healthy work environment. With mental health concerns expanding in organizations, it is important that the Human Resource Development is being placed under the radar to develop key factors with great effects on the wellbeing of the employees. The importance of the Human Resource Development professionals must therefore be acknowledged as a necessity for the contribution of creating a healthy workforce. Gil-



breath and Montesino (2006, p. 569) are stating that not only is the work of the Human Resource Management influencing competitive advantages of an organization, but it can also re-shape the atmosphere at a workplace by improving the psychosocial work environment. Instead of working through secondary interventions, Human Resources can look deeper into the health causes of the employees in an organization by leading primary interventions.

A survey done by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA, 2014, p. 2), addresses numbers for new and emerging risks of the European working situation. From 36 European countries, 49,320 establishments participated in the survey and the results show that psychosocial risk is the biggest challenge of European workplaces of today. 43% of the surveyed workers say they feel heavy time constraints, and around 33% feel long or irregular working hours can be a risk factor for their psychosocial working conditions. Furthermore, the report gives an alarming overview of the situation on how to deal with psychosocial risks in the workplace; the main problem lies in the difficulty employees experience when they want to talk openly about psychological issues they are dealing with. According to the study, "psychosocial risks are of concern to a majority of companies: nearly 80% of managers express a concern about work-related stress, and nearly one in five considers violence and harassment to be of major concern. Looking at single risks, the managers' greatest concerns relate to time pressure and difficult customers, patients and pupil. Despite these concerns, less than one-third of the establishments have procedures that can deal with such risks" (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions and the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2014, p. 6).

## **1.2 Problem statement**

Extensive research has been published on the positive effect of using a yoga program as a distinguished mental health benefit. However, no research actually using yoga programs as a strategy for helping employees battling burnout and stress in the workplace is being conducted as a standard method for organizational development. By adding new dimensions and examples to the theories for reducing workplace stress and burnout, the hope is to reveal the effectiveness yoga programs can have on an organization or a company's outcome.

## **1.3 Research questions**

The main questions that I would like to answer are the following.

- Who is mostly affected by stress and burnout?

- To what extent does a yoga program influence the work performance, work motivation, workplace satisfaction, physical wellbeing and mental wellbeing of employees?
- What relationship can be found between the use of yoga program and the health problems: stress, burnout, depression, tiredness, neck/ back pain and headache?
- Should yoga be integrated as a program in Stress Management?

## **1.4 Purpose- who is this paper written for?**

The purpose of this thesis is to present Human Resource Management a holistic approach method and a different strategy idea for the task; reducing the risks of stress and burnout among employees.

In addition, any organization or company that has employees with psychological problems could benefit from reading this paper. Not only to understand if yoga can be a positive stress management strategy or not, but also because yoga's true essence and potentials are revealed in the thesis.

I can therefore recommend any person interested in developing their personal mind set to read this thesis. With examples from numerous research studies that show results and effects of yoga, my paper is a guide for understanding how psychosocial health problems are influenced by the use of yoga science and its methods.

## **1.5 Conceptual framework**

This graphic is constructed by the author and is created to present the idea behind the use of yoga program in an organization. The thesis introduces with this graphic the pathway of using a yoga program to deal with workplace stress and burnout in an organization. The pyramid is a guideline of the most important factors in the process of adopting yoga methods into the workplace. In the work of Human Resource Management, parts such as knowledge, feedback, training, employee motivation is presented in this framework. The bottom line of the pyramid represents the workers at a workplace and examples of job stressors that can evolve into stress and burnout. The graphic is only a concept idea on how a yoga-program may appear in an organization if the study research from chapter 3 supports the belief of adopting yoga program into a workplace. The colour changes from red to green if yoga can improve the stress/burnout and productivity/concentration level. On the top of the pyramid, the

physical and psychological outcomes, as well as the organizational outcomes are presented. Employees and workplaces are listed on the top and highlights the result a yoga program may show if the empirical study supports the hypotheses which is presented in section 1.7 in this chapter.

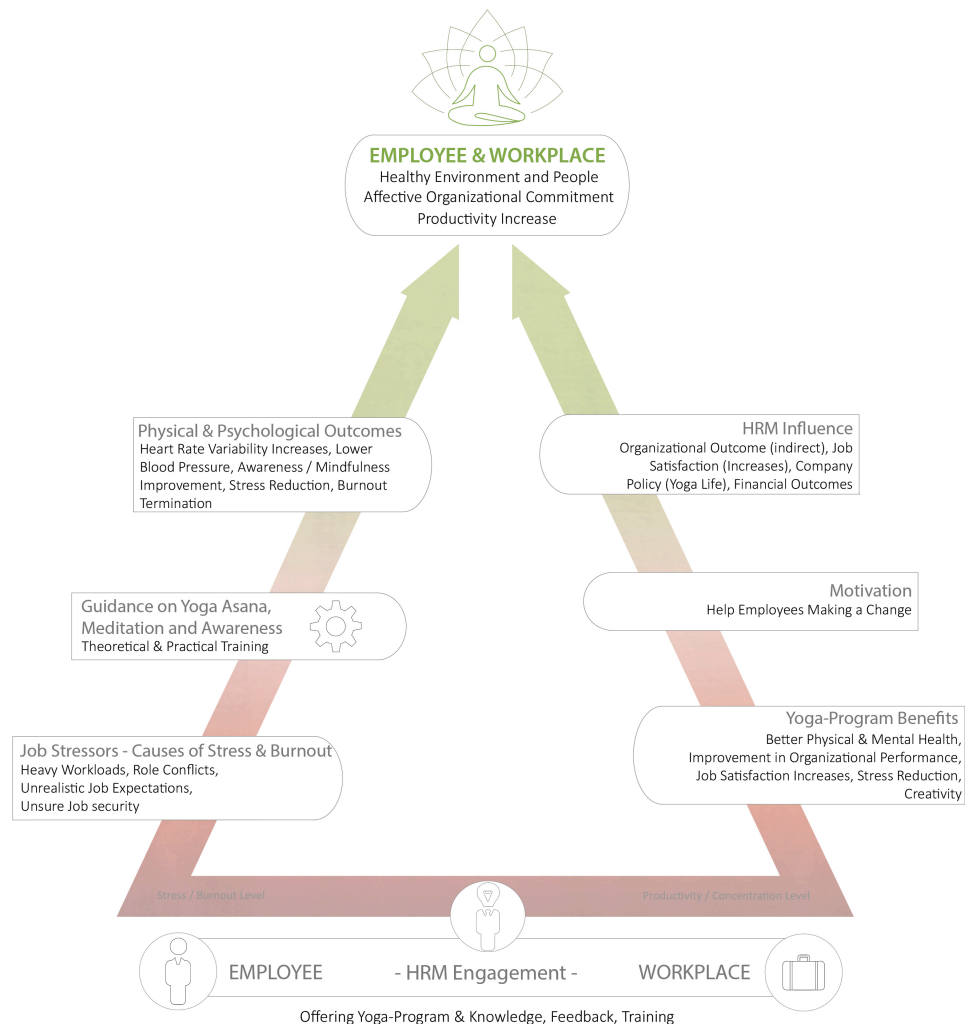


Figure 1 Pathway of a yoga-program in an organization

## 1.6 Summary and organization of thesis

In chapter 1 the introduction to the thesis topic is presented, the purpose of the thesis, conceptual framework, and research questions for the study, the main hypothesis, and a personal note. Chapter 2 examined causes and consequences of workplace burnout and stress, as well as underline a detailed explanation of the possible financial and

health benefits of a yoga program. This chapter also gives the reader a complete understanding of the term *yoga* and a clear submission on the idea of employees practicing yoga. Chapter 3 is focusing on the empirical framework, survey methods, in-depth interview, sampling and data collection measurement and the results. Chapter 4 introduces the analysis based on the results from empirical research and other research findings for more examples. Chapter 5 presents the conclusion, explains implications of the empirical study and discusses suggestions for future research.

## 1.7 Hypothesis

The main hypotheses that are discussed in detail in the following chapters are:

- The more people practice yoga, the more the symptoms of stress and burnout will be reduced.
- It appears that work performance, work satisfaction, physical wellbeing and mental wellbeing of the employees improve in relationship with a yoga program.
- Yoga programs can have a positive impact on organizational outcomes.

## 1.8 Problem discussion

Problem up for discussion is the fact that stress and burnout are a common health issue for employees and I want to find out if the methods of yoga can help to reduce these symptoms. By inducting my own study, I hope to understand what kind of impact the methods of yoga can have in the workplace when it is introduced as a program from Human Resources.

## 1.9 Personal Note

This bachelor thesis is written with a tremendous personal interest in the subjects of yoga and mental health. I have myself experienced the side effects of workplace stress and I have felt dark sides of depression. In my process of conquering my health issues, yoga methods have helped me to find my strength again and to face reality. In 2012, I received a diploma, certifying me as a yoga teacher, after 200 hours of teacher training in India. With my background, personal interest and experience, I want to share my knowledge and bring more attention to the topics of this thesis.

## 2 Theoretical framework

For this chapter, I will discuss the theories that address of the following discussion the relationship between yoga practice in combination with stress and burnout. The aim is to generate the reader with a theoretical understanding of how psychosocial problems in the workplace start to develop and the serious impact stress and burnout has for employees and organizations. The following theories have been specifically selected to create a clear overview of the issues; the causes of stress and burnout in the workplace, the relationship between burnout/ stress and health, the consequences and financial disadvantages of having employees who suffer from job burnout or stress.

Yoga is being introduced as an alternative for employee programs in Stress Management. Examples, as well as the beneficial sides of the yoga methods, are listed in this chapter. At the end, the possible organizational effects a yoga program can have is examined, along with case and study examples.

### 2.1 Concept of workplace burnout and stress

The concept of burnout and stress has been an eager debate topic for more than 40 years. Both of the phenomenons receive much attention from the media and newspapers. The alarming number of people who suffer from it worldwide makes this subject an on-going discussion. When stress is commented on in research papers or articles, the term always receives a different definition. According to Parker and DeCottiis (1983), the reason why stress is so difficult to define precisely, is because the concept either receives a broad or narrow definition. Here are example of published definitions of stress; “a stimulus, response, or an environmental characteristic; an individual attribute, an interaction between an individual and his or her environment” (Parker & DeCottiis, 1983). Readers should be aware of the difficulty of determining a single, precise definition of stress. An important aspect this thesis is focusing on is an integrated approach to stress where the organizational perspective is undertaken, but also the physiological aspects of an individual is put into perspective. The organizational perspective will help us realize which factors need to be changed and developed for reducing stress that occurs inside that organizational structure.

Where as the perspective from the individual's aspects will identify the root causes of stress with a medical approach as a background. In the 1980s, many research studies were conducted to develop more knowledge about burnout, but the problem back then was the nonexistence definition of burnout. Researchers published their surveys, interviews and cases with symptom examples. As a result, these researches explicated the definition of burnout with their own thoughts and meaning (Burisch, 2014, p.14). In the

following explanation of burnout and stress, both terms are defined with the workplace as the main background topic. In addition, there is also a short summary of the historical background of these psychological issues.

### 2.1.1 Burnout – definition

We often receive life advice that adduce us to find a meaningful job and recommendations that we find a job that we are excited about, but how many of us actually feel total job satisfaction? For a great deal of people, waking up and knowing they have to enter a workplace that pulls their emotions down has become a daily routine. The relationship between job and employee seems to have always been a difficult dilemma to resolve.

Burnout as a word first started to appear in the 1970s in the United States. People working in professions of human services were the main users of this term. Also, practitioners and social commentators had identified the idea of burnout as a social problem long before researchers undertook any of these studies. Because of the 40 years of research that has been accomplished on the topic of burnout, this term can now provide the modern society with a deeper understanding of the different psychological aspects it includes (Maslach, Schaufeli, Leiter 2001, p. 398). In a medical article written by Falkum (2000), burnout is described after the definition of Herbert Freudenberger, a psychiatrist who in 1974 launched the name *burnout*. Freudenberger published his new word together with a three-component explanation of the term.

“ The exhaustion component represents the basic individual stress dimension of burnout. It refers to feelings of being overextended and depleted of one’s emotional and physical resources. The cynicism (or depersonalization) component represents the interpersonal context dimension of burnout. It refers to a negative, callous, or excessively detached response to various aspects of the job. The component of reduced efficacy or accomplishment represents the self- evaluation dimensions of burnout. It refers to feelings of incompetence and a lack of achievement and productivity at work” (Freudenberger 1974, cited in Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter 2001, p. 399). The emotional exhaustion is a result of a long-term stress situation at work, high expectations and work demands. Some researchers claim that burnout can only be found in work sectors where service and care are the main professions, but this is a conclusion other researchers don’t agree on (Falkum, 2000). In the following writing, this thesis will conclude burnout as a psychological issue, which can be found in all types of working sectors and not only in service and work care systems.

To understand burnout in a short summary, this thesis introduces the definition made by Casserley and Megginson.

*“A state of extreme exhaustion that occurs, regardless of culture, in highly demanding work environments among career- driven younger employees who become overwhelmed by prolonged work pressure and are no longer able to cope. It is likely that those who are most at risk of burnout will be seen as high flyers by their organization”* (Casserley and Megginson, 2009, p. 16).

This definition highlights the fact that young people are often the victims of burnout. After having studied for several years or worked in internship programs, the next step is often to find the dream job and start a career path. However, one usually doesn't find the dream job that easily and beginning a career in a company or organization with futuristic possibilities is often the result for young people. Despite the fact that young people starting in a new work environment are full of energy and have the willpower to succeed, many find themselves in a working battle because they want to do everything perfectly and not feel like a failure. But if a person feels there are too much work and too little time for personal life, then a feeling of hopelessness can enter. When one cannot master the working tasks like one wishes to do, burnout may be the result in the end.

### **2.1.2 Workplace stress – definition**

There has been an increasing interest in researching the phenomena of workplace stress and the effects it can have on physical wellbeing. Overall, studies done on the subject of stressful events in the workplace support the basic hypothesis: stressful situations in the workplace hold particular personal significance (Potter et al., 2002, p. 789). Although stress is a popular research topic, this definition of the term receives immense criticism. “Stress, including job or occupational stress, is currently both an object of massive scientific research and a term so loosely defined that there have been recommendations that the use of the term is abandoned altogether” (Ivancevich & Ganster, 1987, p. 5). According to the Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment and Health, stress as an overall concept, is “the inability to cope with a perceived threat to one's mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being” (Hartfiel et al., 2011, p. 70). This sentence defines stress in a good, clear way but supports the complaint of Ivancevich and Ganster. The main problem with the word *stress* is the immensely wide definition spectrum it contains. If you ask yourself what stress personally means to you, the answer you will get is most likely not the same as somebody else's definition of it. When stress is viewed with an organizational point of view, “it is generally associated with several vital individual physiological, psychological, and behavioural symptoms” (Schuler, 1980, p. 184). In an earlier article written by Parker and

DeCotiis, the term *workplace stress* can also be referred to as “the feeling of a person who is required to deviate from normal or self-desired functioning in the workplace as the result of opportunities, constraints, or demands relating to potentially important work-related outcomes” (1983, p. 165). In other words, job stress is the negative interface between an individual and an organization (Etzion, Eden & Lapidot, 1998, p. 578).

### 2.1.3 The difference between stress and burnout

Before we continue with the examination of stress and burnout in the workplace, it is important that the difference between the terms is clearly understood. Research often concludes with a close relationship between burnout and stress in their framework, but readers often misunderstand the difference between the two issues. Job stress is mostly experienced due to feelings of pressure, whereas burnout is connected with the state of personal job importance. Burnout is rooted in results and consequences such as: personal dissatisfaction of the job, being unhappy with the job, wanting to leave the job, and low performance level. Researchers have recognized burnout as a special concept of long-term stress experience, but some evidence shows that burnout can also be an outcome without any high stresses (Gorji, 2011, p. 243). There is sufficient anecdotal evidence that supports the belief that burnout does not have to be the result from a long-term stress experience. Stress at work can also indicate that the person feels ones work is important. The relation with stress is in this type of situation a lower burnout symptom. A hospital nurse provides an example: “The days I enjoy work most are the days in which I work the hardest. Burnout develops when there is nothing I can do to help a patient” (Pines 2000, cited in Pines & Keinan 2005).

### 2.1.4 Symptoms of stress and burnout

Burisch (Burisch, 1993, cited in Rösing, 2003, p. 65) has listed the key commonalities of burnout-symptoms such as

- overactivity or underactivity,
- the feeling of helplessness, depression, exhaustion,
- restlessness,
- reduced self-esteem and demoralization,
- deterioration of social relations.

According to Burisch (2014, p. 23-26) the burnout syndrome can be found in 60 types



of working industries. Some of the job positions where burnout has been noted to be a common problem include lawyers, personal advisers, school psychologists, journalists, police officers, and doctors. Symptoms in a starting phase of burnout can be working voluntarily/ unpaid, not being able to switch to a different working modus, repression of failures or disappointments and lack of energy. After the beginning phase, the burnout symptoms can develop into the feeling of reduced engagement. The phase of reduced engagement holds different types of symptoms, depending on what group of people the person with burnout is in contact with. If the person is in contact with clients, patients or students, some of the most occurring symptoms are human disappointment, losing positive feelings towards clients, increase of the inner distance to clients, avoiding contact with clients or colleagues, blaming clients for problems, dehumanization, and a higher acceptance of controlling tools such as punishment. When in contact with other people, in general, symptoms have been documented as coldness, loss of empathy, difficulties in understanding and listening to the other person, and cynicism. Symptoms that occur in contact with work are a loss of idealism, negative attitude, disillusionment, and disgust.

Stress can be experienced with numerous symptoms and Figure 2 characterizes what type of stress symptoms can be conducted. In the process of recognizing stress in employees, one must be aware of the behavioural changes, which can arise in a human being. People express a diverse individuality and, therefore, the signs of stress symptoms will also be different from one person to another. Employees showing emotions such as tiredness, getting angry very fast, or feeling anxious can be recognized as people with stress symptoms. If employees start to make mistakes at work and let co-workers feel their aggression, it could be a sign of stress. The cognition signs include poor concentration towards tasks and a hypersensitive response when receiving criticism. In addition, the physical symptoms often arise in results of dizziness, frequent infections, and controlling sweating. The symptoms will lead on to further health and mental problems if they are not treated in an early stage.

Signs of Stress	
How You Feel (Emotions) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• anxious</li> <li>• depressed / tired</li> <li>• angry / irritable / frustrated</li> <li>• apathetic / bored</li> </ul>	How You Think (Cognitions) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• poor concentration and memory</li> <li>• poor organisation and decision making</li> <li>• less creative in problem solving</li> <li>• hypersensitive to criticism</li> </ul>
How You Behave <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have accidents / make mistakes</li> <li>• eating / sleeping problems</li> <li>• take drugs (e.g. tobacco, alcohol)</li> <li>• problematic social behaviour (e.g. withdrawal, aggression)</li> </ul>	Your body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sweating, dizzy, nauseous, breathless</li> <li>• aches and pains</li> <li>• frequent infections</li> </ul>

Figure 2 Signs of stress. Source: Michie, 2002, p. 68

It can be extremely important in the work of Human Resources to be aware of these stress symptoms in the process of working with employees who are affected by stress. If Human Resources are capable of recognizing the symptoms of stress immediately, the process of offering guidance and support to employees can happen in an early stage and may contribute in preventing any further health issues.

### 2.1.5 Types of personality

It is highly recommended that any company or organization with more than one employee should know how to manage the behaviour of employees (Martin, 2010, p. 21).

The behaviour of any employee can usually be understood by analysing his or her personality. To determine which type of personality an employee has, the theory of Friedman and Rosenman has been selected for this thesis. McLeod (2011) explains Friedman and Rosenman's theory; it is based on peoples' response to stress and the effect stress has on them. The theory is developed from an observation of patients with heart conditions that had to sit in a waiting room. Some of the people were not able to fully sit in their seats for a long period of time and were sitting on the edge of the seat instead. Usually, people tend to sit leaned back on their seat, but the way some of them were sitting showed in the seats that were worn down on the front edges and on the armrests. The back lean of the seat, however, did not show any sign of being worn out. Friedman and Rosenman labelled this observation as *Type A personality*. Type B is a personality, which is more relaxed and implies a calmer wellbeing. They tend to be

more professional and show high performance together with a lower stress level than type A. The theory of Friedman and Rosenman (1974) is a good example to understand why some people are more affected by workplace stress than others. Employees who are able to work in a calm tempo with the capability of structuring work tasks are less likely to be affected by stress. Those who rely on multitasking for job accomplishment are more often affected by stress.

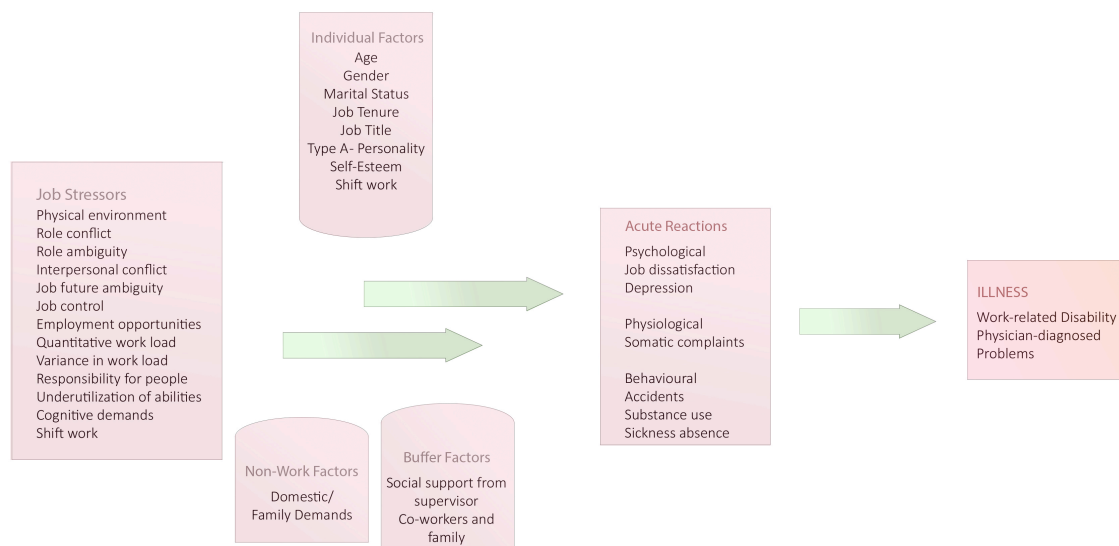
A predictor of burnout and stress is the capability of recognizing which personality type a person is. Are you always in a hurry, impatient, competitive, with high expectations for yourself? Then you may be a type A person (Brock & Grady, 2002, p. 14).

Typical for Type A:	Typical for Type B:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very competitive and self-critical</li> <li>• Goal oriented without any joyful feelings of accomplishments</li> <li>• High work involvement</li> <li>• Tend to overact</li> <li>• High blood pressure (hypertension)</li> <li>• Impatient with delays</li> <li>• Multitasking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More tolerant of others</li> <li>• Relaxed</li> <li>• More reflective</li> <li>• High level of imagination and creativity</li> </ul>

### 2.1.6 Types of stressors (in relation to stress)

The illustration underneath indicates what type of stressors can occur at the workplace and which factors must be taken in consideration in the evolution from job stress to illnesses (Murphy, 1995, p. 41). Murphy's model contains the most important key features for the relationship between job stress and health outcomes, and the same model is also being used by numerous of scientists and doctors in the work of stress research. In this model, job stressors are listed as one category, but it is often listed into several categories such as role in the organization, relationship at work, career development and organizational structure (Cooper & Marshall 1992, cited in Murphy, 1995, p. 41). The box with individual factors presents the personal characteristics of a person,

whereas the non-work factors indicate things like family matters, financial issues or social relationships. Buffer factors represent the influence of social support, physical exercises or coping skills. By using this model as an example for understanding the process of workplace stress, it shows very clearly that stress is a complex problem. It is not only work domains that influence the intensity of stress, but non-work domains must also be included.



*Figure 3 Model of job stress in relationship with health problems*  
Source: Murphy, 1995, p. 41.

## 2.2 Causes of stress and burnout in the workplace

In order to understand the causes of stress and burnout of employees, we should not only view the external factors as a significant factor, but also “the importance of considering personal characteristics, or social structures, as correlates of workplace stress” (Armstrong & Griffin, 2004, p. 580). Sometimes causes can be from too much work overload, or perhaps the social environment is a negative influence for the workforce. The conflict between private life and work can also be the cause of a stressful human condition. In addition, the physical aspects with examples such as a high noise levels at the workplace and areas with overcrowded people have shown to be relevant causes of stress (Fairbrother & Warn, 2003, p. 9). When an employee experiences chronic workplace stress, it can very easily lead to burnout. If this happens, the person feels the inability to give their best work performance and starts to reflect on their job as meaningless. This state is usually identified through a general state of fatigue and a decrease in professional performance (Montero-Marin et al., 2013, p. 2). In this section of the chapter we will look further into the cause factors, which can be identified at the workplace, as well as the factors that are located inside of a person.

### 2.2.1 External factors causing stress and burnout

In the discussion of what causes burnout, Gillespie and Cohen (1984) have published a suggestion of six steps, which can lead to a burned-out worker. The process from being a healthy and productive employee to a burnt-out worker is explained in the following.

1. At first a low level of communication between employee and supervisor can be registered.
2. The employee feels a sense of isolation and loneliness. This state often occurs when a person has the feeling he or her is not getting enough support from the supervisor or employer.
3. If the supervisor ignores the employee or doesn't offer this person time to present his or her ideas, it can affect the employee with a low confidence in a professional judgment.
4. Negative feelings toward work start to build up inside of the employee.
5. The employee doesn't feel an interest for his or her work profession anymore and disengagement with clients or any other work related person follows.
6. Working tasks is now looked at as only a routine and employee displays inflexible decision making. The employee is turning more and more into a working robot.

= Burnout worker

Maslach and Leiter (1997, p. 38-58) explains the causes of burnout such as; *work overload*, *lack of control*, *insufficient reward*, the *absence of fairness* and *conflicting values*. Work overload is often a problem when organizations feel they can test the work-flow of their employees. Organizations claim a higher production level, an increase of clients, and the demands of every sector don't seem to stop there. In addition, today's economy forces family households to increase their work shift and secure the family income. The result is no surprise: exhaustion of employees. Another cause of burnout is the lack of control many employees experience on a daily basis. If you are not in control of your own working methods, you are at risk of experiencing burnout. Lack of control can kill the creative mindset of human beings and force them to undertake work in a specific order presented by their bosses or supervisor, an order they may person-

ally not recommend. Positive feedback and recognition for work performance is important if any organization wishes their employees to feel satisfied and happy at work. This is sadly not the case for many employees. Insufficient rewarding is a common fact in countless companies and organizations. For a workplace to be experienced as fair, the elements of trust, openness and respect must also be part of the organizational philosophy. Only when all three of these elements are first integrated into the workplace can an employee then feel total engagement to the work. If employees do not perceive any of these elements, organizations are at great risk of developing burnout symptoms in the workplace. Conflicting values can also be a cause of burnout, especially if employees observe their company to only focus on profit and gains. A question many find themselves asking; what is *really* important? Some organizations tend to only be driven by numbers and forget the importance of job satisfaction for their employees.

According to a report from WHO, women seem to be more affected by workplace stress than men do. Many women are responsible for taking care of the home and still manage to have a full-time job. The interaction between dealing with both work and home care can sometimes lead to stressful conditions. It is also a common fact that the gender roles in our society are not always viewed as equal. The feeling of having to conform to social expectations can transform into stress factors, which seems to occur on a daily basis worldwide. Sexual harassment directed at women at work can also be documented in numerous of organizations and is often generating the level of stress (WHO, 2007, p. 18). Two other sources of stress in the workplace are the relationships at work, and the organizational culture. "Managers who are critical, demanding, unsupportive or bullying create stress, whereas a positive social dimension of work and good team working reduces it" (Michie, 2002, p. 69).

### **2.2.2 Internal factors causing stress and burnout**

The internal factors are the ones we keep inside of ourselves. "Personal circumstances may contribute to feelings of stress at work. When suffering job-related stress, we ordinarily seek a cause within the workplace. However, personal problems may exacerbate an already stressful work environment" (Brock & Grady, 2002, p. 18). Whereas several people can experience the external factors in a mutual feeling, the internal factors are always individual and people dependent. One of the internal factors, which can be found in people who suffer from stress and burnout, is the lack of confidence or self-esteem. A human emotion like low self-esteem can occur when a person is inexperienced and needs more practice in their job. Another personal factor is body and health. Frequent illnesses and poor health can lead a person to feel incapable of proper work performance. A great internal factor is also the art of irrational thinking and is mostly a

problem for anyone who believes they can be superman or superwoman at work. It is, therefore, important to set realistic goals and know you cannot always be perfect in your work performance. A complicated relationship for many is the clash between work and family responsibilities. Long working hours and the responsibility of picking up children from school, for example, can cause stress in a person's life (McConnell, 2005, p. 370).

#### *Short summary of the internal factors that can cause burnout*

- Personal attitude to the work, 'helper' syndrome: feeling the need to help everybody around you and be the fixer for everything. People with burnout often tend to develop this type of behaviour.
- Personal skills, the ability to solve problems.
- Enthusiasm for the job, personal ambition and able to balance work and personal life (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work).

In terms of workplace stress, one person might experience stress as a result of the work shifts whereas someone else enjoys the work shifts and is not affected by stress. The internal factors show that "individuals differ in their risk of experiencing stress and in their vulnerability to the adverse effects of stress. Individuals are more likely to experience stress if they lack material resources (for example, financial security) and psychological resources (for example, coping skills, self-esteem), and are more likely to be harmed by this stress if they tend to react highly competitive and pressured (type A behaviour)" (Michie, 2002, p. 69).

## **2.3 Consequences of stress and burnout in the workplace**

Today's generation live in a time where costs grow dramatically, there are high cuts in budgets, and the fear of getting fired is a common issue. This creates the need to take a step back, review our working system and identify the luring consequences, which appear frequently (Griffin et al., 2010, p. 239). The willingness to adapt supervision and security for reducing an unwilling and potentially violent population can only be found in a few organizations according to Griffin and Armstrong. With limited researches indicating the negative consequences burnout and stress can have for the society and organizations, this topic must obtain more attention for the future (Armstrong & Griffin, 2004, p. 577). Skirrow and Hatton (2007) "identified in their review on burnout six studies investigating the relationship between staff burnout, personal well-being and behaviour.

Despite some limitations, nearly all studies showed an association between staff burn-out and outcomes such as job satisfaction, intention to resign, positive client interaction, general distress, anxiety, and depression” (Skirrow & Hatton, 2007, cited in Kozak et.al, 2013, p. 104). Moreover, stress ”is a condition that arises when an individual experiences a demand that exceeds his or her real or perceived abilities to successfully cope with the demand, resulting in disturbance to his or her psychological and psychological equilibrium” (Kolbell, 1995, cited in Colligan & Higgins, 2006).

### 2.3.1 Consequences for employees

Studies, which have been done on burnout, imply a result of negative relationship between burnout and psychological outcomes. A meta-analysis from 1996, by Lee and Ashforth, states that ”the correlates of the three burnout dimensions and job satisfaction, indicate a significant negative correlation between the depersonalization dimension of burnout and job satisfaction” (Low et al., 2001). Organizations will never be perfect, and there will always be a factor that is reflected on as negative in a workplace, however, the consequences of burnout and job stress can be more serious than that.

Severe consequences can follow with the result of burnout and job stress. In the following are examples of employee consequences that occurs due to burnout.

1. **Withdrawal behaviours develop:** Employees feel a discomfort in organizational conditions and tries to avoid it. The result can be withdrawn- leave, work early, arrive at work late, take long breaks, and avoiding the workplace when ever possible.
2. **Interpersonal friction results:** Burnout can lead employees to feel cynical and heartless toward others, minor differences turn into monumental arguments, work assignments seems to be impossible to solve, and friends and people are recognized as rivals.
3. **Performance declines:** Quality of work performance of an employee reduces (Schuler and Jackson, 1983).

In the aim to recognize the most important consequences of burnout, researchers have identified a strong relationship between burnout and health outcomes. From a Finnish study, burnout was concluded to be an immense influence to severe health problems such as mental disorders and cardiovascular diseases (Leiter et al., 2013).

When we talk about job stress, the consequences are mutual to the consequences from burnout. Work-related stress can also result in sickness, absence due to mental



health, and musculoskeletal or cardiovascular problems. In worst cases, even death can be the consequence of stress when experienced over a longer time (WHO, 2007, p. 9).

Serious health problems such as chronic pain and psychiatric symptoms such as anxiety and depression can come from work-related stress. Studies on depression suggest that people who suffer from a higher stress level are more in danger of developing depression. Depression is also documented to be the main reason for ill health and productivity loss. People who are affected by chronic pain can also suffer from social and psychological consequences, which can affect the quality of life and daily activities extremely negatively (Köhn et al., 2013, p. 2).

### **2.3.2 General and financial consequences for organizations**

One major consequence for organizations is the fact that employees tend to quit their jobs when burnout is being experienced. Research done on work related burnouts and their intention to quit, several of the examples indicate a great correlation between burnout and job leave. An example of a profession with high rates of premature job leaving is teaching (Weisberg, 1994). Researches from different cultures indicate that teachers are the ones who have the highest level of job stress, and many of them often experience burnout after coping unsuccessfully with chronic stress. One study is showing that 52% of teachers from six different schools is motivated to leave the teaching profession. The feeling of not belonging and exhaustion are the main factors that influence teachers job satisfaction and motivation to leave (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011, p. 1037).

Research also “shows that understanding organizational commitment can provide insight into how organizational commitment is related to the intentions to leave. The turnover is always costly to the organizations in all sectors given the large investment made in the selection, training and development of personnel” (Labatmedien, Endriulaitien and Gustainien, 2007).

The causes and effects of stress and burnout can be an expensive affair for companies and organizations. “Reduced engagement and ultimate loss of high flyers, reduced productivity, risk management issues for brand and reputation, and jeopardized succession management” (Casserley & Megginson, 2009, p. 66) are some of the financial consequences of having employees who suffer from burnout. Numbers from the European Union confirm the dramatic influence work-related stress has on the economy; Back when there were only 15 member states in the European Union, work-related stress affected at least 40 million workers at a cost of €20 billion euros a year. British authorities also documented concerning numbers. In 2007, it was reported that the

British economy lost 13.8 million working days because of job stress, anxiety, and depression. Productivity levels presented money losses of up to £3.7 billion annually. Numbers in America do not show the contrary and indicate an even worse situation than in Europe: it is estimated that more than \$300 billion is the annual cost for absenteeism, accidents, employee turnover, reduced productivity, health care and worker compensation. If these numbers are not proof of the serious impact stress-related problems have on any organization, here is another concerning fact; workers who report health problems, due to stress, cost the health care system 46% more than employees with other types of health issues (Casserley & Megginson, 2009, p. 59).

## **2.4 Stress and burnout is a global problem**

The number of people experiencing stress-related illnesses or burnout has grown in recent years. A percentage of the victims of stress and burnout seek help in primary health care, others have health programs at work they follow, but there are still a large number of people who don't follow any regime or a beneficial health program. For the treatment of stress-related symptoms and burnout, there is no golden rule for a perfect guideline. However, some researchers suggest that yoga-methods are a solution and strategy for reducing stress-symptoms and burnout. (Anderzen-Carlsson et al., 2014, p. 1). As the thesis mentioned in Chapter 1, nearly 80% of European managers express a concern about work-related stress. Psychosocial risks are undoubtedly a looming problem and a concern for a majority of companies. Despite these risks, less than one-third of establishments have procedures in place to deal with such problems, when they arise (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions and the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2014, p. 6). Job stress can have sincere professional and personal consequences. In a survey done by the Anxiety Disorders Association of America, (ADAA, 2006) employees were asked about workplace stress and how it affected work. 56% said stress had an affect on the workplace performance, 51% felt stress had an impact on their relationship with co-workers, 50% said stress affected the quality of work, and 43% said the relationship with their superiors was also affected by stress. The same report states that, of those who felt the stress, only 40% actually talked to their employer about their concerns about the workplace stress. A common reason for not opening up about job stress is fear. There is a fear of the boss believing you are just uninterested or unwilling to do your work. There is also the fear of being labeled as weak or not being taken seriously. Of those who talked to their employer, only four in ten said they were offered help in the form of a mental health professional, or stress-management or relaxation classes. The effect of burnout and stress has also been documented to reduce the work performance of employees. According to a survey done by Vital Worklife (2015), stress and burnouts are growing problems of American physicians. From the 2,005 survey participants, around

50% felt a lower job satisfaction due to stress or burnout. In the same survey, 43% answered that they feel tiredness and 28% reported to have sleep problems.

Burnout and stress are not only documented with alarming numbers in Europe and the US. This is apparently a global problem that is growing rapidly on every continent. There have been very few burnout studies done in Africa, however, the ones that exist were conducted in the fields of medicine and health care and share the same indication: burnout is a growing issue. An example can be observed among maternal health staff at a hospital in Malawi. From all the workers, 70% say they are emotionally exhausted and 43% feel depersonalization, whereas 74% experience reduced personal accomplishment. Facts and numbers from South America are mainly coming from Brazil. People who work as health care agents or teachers are reported to be under an extreme burnout risk. The concern of burnout and job stress is growing in Asia and researchers are focusing more on this topic than ever before (Carod-Artal & Vazquez, 2013, p. 20-22).

Numbers from all over the world document an alarming truth about job stress and burnout; this is a problem of the general global population. Actions and new development ideas for reducing stress and burnout can be seen in numerous places, especially in medical science. The interest for yoga in a clinical setting has grown rapidly and is frequently incorporated into clinical programs that deal with mental and physical issues, especially programs for stress-related illnesses and concerns. Clinical programs including yoga methods is demonstrating promising efficacy (Riley & Park, 2015, p. 1).

Having now explained the definition, causes and consequences of stress and burnout in the workplace, the next step is to find an effective management strategy to work against the global challenge of stress and burnout. As an example for Stress Management in Human Resources, the next section of this thesis introduces the methods of yoga.

## **2.5 Introduction and definition of yoga**

In this second part of chapter two, this thesis introduces the example of using a yoga-program as part of Human Resource Management strategies. Before we go further into analyzing the effectiveness of using a yoga-program with employees, the concept of yoga, along with any possible misconceptions of it, are important to clearly explain first.

Researchers believe that yoga can be tracked back to more than ten thousand years ago and was created by a tantric civilization in India. This civilization is believed to have developed yoga as a specific philosophy of life. People of Tantrism believed in finding a way to attain freedom from the bondage of the world while still living in it. Techniques

were developed to reach and obtain this human state of freedom, and experience a higher form of reality. In the process of developing techniques for achieving such consciousness, yoga arose as the result. Ancient sages were the ones who developed yoga science and spread it carefully around the world. In ancient times, yoga techniques were always kept as a secret to the public, as opposed to today where yoga is open to anyone. The knowledge of yoga science was only passed on from a teacher or guru to a disciple by word of mouth. The main reason for this action was to ensure that the techniques and the meaning of yoga science were never misunderstood (Saraswati, 1969, p. 2). As of today, yoga methods are introduced all over the Internet and you can find a yoga studio in almost any city you live in. "Yoga is an excellent solution for mental and psychological problems, and therefore it is becoming very popular. It, is of course, true that popularity can sometimes damage the real and original nature of a subject" (Iyengar, 1977). Today's popularity of yoga has created a misconception by the western society. Great amounts of people attend yoga classes with the intention to keep their body fit, but this is not the true and complete essence behind yoga practice. Yoga "is far from simply being physical exercises. It is an aid to establishing a new perception of what is real, what is necessary, and how to become established in a way of life, which embraces both inner and outer realities" (Saraswati, 1969, p. 5). By practicing yoga, a person will experience different aspects being worked on, such as the physical, vital, mental, emotional, psychic and spiritual aspects (Saraswati, 1969, p. 1).

Yoga can be a helpful tool for learning techniques that can open our conscious awareness and expand it to our unconscious parts of the mind. The link between expanding our conscious awareness and into the unconscious is important in the process of realizing which patterns and habits lead us to feeling stressed. One of the many things yoga teaches you is how to transform your relationship with psychological issues. Instead of fighting against your symptoms, yoga can help the human mind understand why we react and feel certain things in specific settings (Sangeetha Vinod & Sudhakar B, 2014, p. 101).

## **2.6 What is a yoga program?**

Yoga is being practiced by millions of people around the world and there is not a specific program one needs to follow. The most important thing to know before anyone starts practicing yoga, is the fact that yoga is a personal journey. It can not be compared to sports, because it is not competitive; it only believes in the standpoint of the individual. Throughout history, many different forms of yoga have been developed. The most well-known style is called Hatha yoga, which is the main type that most people practice today.

Imagine Hatha yoga as the root of a tree, and all the branches from the tree symbolize different Hatha yoga styles. Examples of different styles are Anusara, Ashtanga, Iyengar, Bikram, Kundalini, Yoga Nidra, Restorative yoga and Vinyasa (Field, 2012 p. 17).

Scientists and doctors around the world have been researching the effects of yoga practice. Many studies believe yoga can restore and maintain physical and mental health through the methods called asanas, pranayamas and mudras. This thesis also expounds on techniques of mediation as part of a yoga-program. The Sanskrit words *asanas*, *pranayamas* and *mudras* will be explained in this chapter, but it is not a necessity to practice all of these yoga methods combined together to experience a personal effect. It is however extremely important to receive individual guidance when people with mental or physical health issues are practicing yoga (Saraswati, 1969, p. x). The role and knowledge of Human Resources are particularly important in the process of introducing a yoga-program to employees and this subject will be discussed further at the end of this chapter. Although there are many different forms of yoga, this thesis only focuses on the methods of Hatha Yoga in the example of a yoga-program. Hatha Yoga can be traced back to medieval Indian philosophy and focuses mostly on the body (asanas) and breathing (pranayama). It was believed that the body needed to be strong before the mind could be disciplined. With these terms, Hatha Yoga developed into the practice of self-discipline and physical control (Norberg, 2008, p. 20).

When you hear the word “yoga” there is a good chance that you have this picture in your head where someone is doing a posture, which you distinguish as utterly difficult. This kind of posture is referred to as **asana** (Yogasana) and is a body posture or position, which can help to open up the energy channels and help you to be in control of your mind. According to yogic scriptures, there were originally 8,400,000 asanas, with the purpose of representing the 8,400,000 incarnations an individual had to go through in order to be liberated from the cycle of birth and death. Throughout time, Yogis have thoroughly reduced the number of regularly practiced asanas down to the few hundreds we have today (Saraswati, 1969, p. 9). Asanas can be practiced by anyone, and flexibility, body shape or any other aspect is not a hindrance for practicing asana postures. Mind and body can often be experienced as two different things, but it is important to remember that they are always connected. Practicing asanas will help a person to integrate and harmonize his or her body with the mind. People dealing with psychological blockades may therefore feel a change when practicing yoga because asanas “releases mental tensions by dealing with them on the physical level, acting somato-psychically, through the body to the mind. For example, emotional tensions and suppression can tighten up and block the smooth functioning of the lungs, diaphragm and breathing process, contributing to debilitating illnesses in the form of respiratory disorders” (Saraswati, 1969, p. 11). One of the misconceptions of yoga is the

false belief that the practice of asanas is a form of exercise. Asanas has nothing to do with exercise and is not a sport where you can compete with others. Asanas, can of course, be practiced with other people together, but every person keeps their attention to their own yoga mat and the focus is always on your own body and mind. The practice of asanas cultivates awareness, relaxation, concentration and meditation. One aspect of asanas is the process of developing your body into good physical health, which can be reached through the methods of stretching, massaging and stimulating internal organs. It is, therefore, explainable that some may think asana is equal to exercise, but asana is only complementary to exercise. The difference between asana and exercise can be explained in the way they affect the body differently: “when yogasanas are performed, respiration and metabolic rates slow down, the consumption of oxygen and the body temperature drop. During exercise, however, the breath and metabolism speed up, oxygen consumption rises, and the body gets hot. Yoga postures tend to arrest catabolism, whereas exercise promotes it and asanas are designed to have a specific effect on the glands and internal organs” (Saraswati, 1969, p. 12).

The next yoga method this section introduces is **pranayama**: methods of breath control. At a first glance, one may associate it with breathing exercises, and although pranayama involves breathing, it does not serve the intention to introduce more oxygen to the lungs. Pranayama was developed as a yoga method to “influence the flow of *prana* in the *nadis* or energy channels of the *pranamaya kosha* or energy body” (Saraswati, 1969, p. 369). Prana is explained in Hinduism as “vital air, or breath, of the human body”. It is also interpreted as the vital life- sustaining force of both the individual body and the universe (Jashmuheen, 2006, p. 13). In other words, pranayama methods can help release blockages inside the human body, activate one flow of energy and bring an experience of full awareness. In this context, the prana is associated with the heart, muscles, organs of respiration and nerves (Saraswati, 1969, p. 371). The human body and its flow of energy are strongly affected by exercise, work, sleep and other activities. But the body is also greatly impacted by sides of the mind such as emotions, thoughts, and imagination. People suffering from stress and burnout are the perfect examples of human beings with a lack of energy because of having a low pranic flow. “Depletion of energy in a particular prana leads to the devitalization of the organs and limbs it governs and ultimately to disease or metabolic dysfunction” (Saraswati, 1969, p. 372).

The ancient yogis developed **mudra** as a yoga movement in order to attain deeper awareness and concentration. Mudra can be described as “psychic, emotional, devotional and aesthetic gestures or attitudes” (Saraswati, 1969, p. 421).

A mudra can be a simple hand position, like the Anjali mudra, which is a well-known mudra where the palms of the hands are pressed together. To visualize it better, imagine you stand straight up with your feet together and the palms of your hands are

pressed together in front of your heart. In this posture, the asana called “mountain pose” and the Anjali mudra are being practiced together. Mudras are extremely easy to do and can help “create inner peace and inner strength, eliminate fatigue and anxiety, protect physical and emotional health, help transcend stress, depression, guilt and anger, calm the mind and sharpen intuition, and promote happiness, love prosperity and longevity” (Menen, 2011, p.11). According to scientific terms, “mudras provide a means to access and influence the unconscious reflexes and primal, instinctive habit patterns that originate in the primitive areas of the brain around the brain stem” (Saraswati, 1969, p. 422). The idea behind mudras was to create yoga movements, which could help a person to let go of instinctive habit patterns and develop a more alert consciousness. There are numerous mudras and they can be categorized into 5 groups: hand mudras, head mudras, postural mudras, lock mudras and perineal mudras. Saraswati (1969, p. 424) suggested in his book that the mudras should be performed with or after asana and pranayama.

The last yoga method this chapter introduces is the practice of **meditation**, which is called **Pratyahara** in Sanskrit. Practicing meditation means to eliminate your attention to the outer world, and instead focus it on the inward (Simpkins & Simpkins, 2011, p. 105). Yogis believe it is through meditation that a person can learn how to be more in control over inner emotions. Different types of meditation practices are offered today and the techniques used differ in significant ways. Some meditation methods are in favour of using “concentration or pointed the attention on internal experiences such as bodily sensations, feelings, thoughts, or memories. Other techniques focus on external stimuli such as visual images, sounds, or musical melodies” (Liebler & Moss, 2009, p. 100).

Short summary; Asanas and pranayama are focusing on how we treat our human body and how the breath can be a medium for connecting with our energy. Pratyahara, meditation, teaches us to be more present and turn our awareness from the outside, and bring it to our inside. Meditation helps us eliminate an overload of activity that can be on our mind. Mudras are movements that can help us achieve awareness and increase our concentration.

This thesis has now introduced different methods of yoga techniques, which can be combined into a full yoga program. It is important to be aware that yoga classes that teach in the Hatha style will most likely include asana, pranayama, mudra and pratyahara, but it is not a requirement to practice all four elements in order to be a practitioner of yoga.

## 2.7 Integrating yoga program as an alternative in Stress Management for employees and organizations

The idea of inviting employees to practice yoga methods at the workplace is not a new phenomenon. Several corporations have shown interest in finding out how much effect yoga methods can have for their employees. But before we understand the effectiveness of a yoga program, the following key features are recommended to be integrated as standard procedure in a Stress Management program in order to experience positive effects of stress reduction, stress control and health improvement (Gordon, 1994, p. 311):

- **Knowledge acquisition:** Training in awareness, learning about attitudes and how to change them, education and skills identification.
- **Skills acquisition:** Techniques that are being introduced such as yoga and meditation
- **Feedback:** Employee receives feedback on performance, development and progress.

The stress an employee feels at work can often affect other co-workers to feel the same, and this leads on to be a culture of stress in many cases. According to a deputy director at the National Institutes of Health's Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, integrating as many Stress Management modalities as possible is the best thing to do for the employees (Carlson Shepherd, p. 36).

## 2.8 Yoga program and health effects

The approach to offer yoga training for employees could be through a program, which introduces meditation and yoga methods such as *asanas*, *pranayamas*, and *mudras*. According to researchers, yoga can be a tool for stress reduction, burnout limitation and a general life improvement. Since yoga offers a diverse compound of methods, the mixture is said to have a uniquely positive effect on people's health, such as increasing flexibility, decreasing blood pressure, and reducing stress levels (Thomley et al., 2011, p. 27). In an article from Ross and Thomas (2010, p. 3), positive health effects of practicing yoga have been documented in the following areas: levels of salivary cortisol, blood glucose, plasma rennin levels, epinephrine levels, heart rate and blood pressure. It is also documented in some cases that yoga can have the impact of reducing stress, boosting the immune system, and decreasing markers of inflammation. Of course, it is in the best interest of any organization that healthcare costs are kept on a low level, but



finding the perfect solution for today's global challenge of enhancing employee health is at a critical point. Time means money in the business world, and companies are slowly adapting to the idea of bringing new alternative methods to the workplace as the new strategy for helping their employees stay healthy and productive at work. In the U.S. and Europe, Yoga is increasingly being used for self-care and viewed as a great tool for improving health. In a recent American survey, 30 million people (72% of which were women) said they had practiced yoga before. One of the most popular yoga methods in the US and Europe is Iyengar yoga, which has been specially created by the yoga master Iyengar for reducing health problems. Other yoga intervention studies are also showing great findings on the positive effects of emotional and physical well-being, resilience to stress in the workplace and the general health status (Michalsen et al., p. 2).

## **2.9 The role of HRM and mindful engagement**

All across the world, Organizations are facing global challenges. The economic crisis and political forces are some of the factors companies always need to keep an extra eye on. With high numbers at stake, it is not always easy for managers to adopt a mindful engagement in the workplace. A mindful engagement from the Human Resources can, therefore, be helpful for a new and more conscious awareness and a connection between co-workers. One thing is to have the idea of adapting a yoga-program in an organization, but it is another thing to know the practical part of incorporating it into a system that actually works. There are numerous ways of executing an idea. In this section, the thesis suggests to follow the steps of Ivancevich and Matteson as describes in the following. In order to promote health and stress management, top managers of the concerning topic should be the ones who develop a plan for employees dealing with stress symptoms, burnout or any other issue. Managers with knowledge and experience are the ones that need to take control of psychosocial problems that occur at the workplace. Clearly stated, no incompetent manager should act as an amateur psychiatrist. It is the responsibility of top managers to show interest and concern about stress and burnout through their actions. As a first and vital step, if a yoga-program is being introduced to the workplace, the leaders and managers need to participate fully and show commitment. As a second step, managers need to encourage their employees to talk and make them feel secure when topics such as job stress, work environment, and personal emotions are on the discussion table. Communication is always a key factor. If employees feel they can communicate with their managers on a deeper level, some of the stress causes can be eliminated - just through a conversation. There are other forms of stress and burnout that need more specific help. By introducing a new strategy, like a yoga-program, it is important that every type of manager, from the top-level executive to the first-line supervisors, has been fully

briefed on the yoga program. All should be fully informed concerning the causes and consequences of stress and burnout and what the symptoms look like. Mindful engagement is an instrument that displays a genuine concern for human health, not a focus on saving the most money possible. The human being as an individual must always come as a first priority in the work of mindfulness, and a reduction in health care costs should always come as a second goal. After all, if you lose your mental and physical health, financial aspects will most likely become unimportant. As a third step, managers must first understand the importance of self-awareness if they want to manage stress at the workplace. The secret lies in understanding your own problems. If you want to recognize the existence of stress and burnout in employees, you must initially analyse yourself and develop a personal awareness of your own problems. Ask yourself some of these questions: What job conditions make you feel stressed? What are your blood pressure and pulse rate? Do you ever feel like you are wasting your time and like you are doing your work for the wrong reason? After you have answered questions like these, only then is it suggested that you be able to understand the situation of your employees to the fullest (1980, p. 13).

## **2.10 Benefits of a yoga program in an organizational prospective**

Researchers have been investigating the improvement of organizational performance in a relationship to yoga practice. In one study, the attempt was to see if 84 managers in a manufacturing unit with a *yoga way of life* showed a positive impact on the five indicators: job satisfaction, job involvement, goal orientation, affective organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior. According to Adhia, Nagendra & Mahadevan (2010), the creators of this study, a yoga way of life can play an improving factor among managers. Only the job involvement factor did not show any improvement in the study results. The pre-status of the study participants' job involvement already indicated a moderate reliability, and can imply the reason for no improvement in this one factor. When a factor is already in a positive area, there is only a certain amount of room for improvement.

Another interesting discussion is the impact yoga can have on management. Amin Mohamed et al. (2004, p. 102) presented four propositions on the subject of spirituality and management. In the review on spirituality and workplace, the first claim states: "The stronger the spiritual factor of the personality, the more tolerant the person is of work failure and the less susceptible they are to stress." The second claim states "the stronger the spiritual factor of the personality, the more the person favours the democratic style of leadership, trusts others, and has a higher tolerance of human diversity." The third claim is "the stronger the spiritual factor of personality the more the person

exhibits altruistic and citizenship behaviour.” And the last claim notes “the stronger the spiritual factor of the personality, the more the person’s commitment to the organization and work group increases.”

This thesis does not emphasize spirituality in the concept of a religion, but rather as a great example for management style and company policy. To determine an understandable explanation for supporting spirituality in the workplace, the thoughts of Sangster can be taken into consideration. His opinion of a spiritual worker is someone who can “think co-operatively and/or altruistically, have a balanced, objective view of the world; listen as much as (or more than) they speak; apply three-dimensional bigger picture thinking; believe in some higher driving force and purpose beyond humankind; find the time to ‘think things through’ objectively; think laterally in order to promote realistic solutions; encourage and empower others selflessly; work open-mindedly with a wide range of people; consistently display integrity and trust, and: expect the best from people with out being a ‘soft touch’ ” (Sangster 2003, cited in Marques, 2005, p. 151).

Another discussed benefit of yoga is the outcome of possible cost reduction in medical health care. Sat Bir S. Khalsa, an assistant professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School claims in an article by Employee Benefit News that “ the math is very simple. If you practice these techniques, you will reduce costs. If you use yoga as a therapy for one thing, you’re not just treating that one thing. You’re treating yourself as a whole” (Carlson Shepherd, 2009, p. 36). Researchers from the University of York also support the fact of yoga likely reducing health costs. In their research, people who suffered from back pain participated in a group yoga program for 12 weeks. The background was to see if the participants had fewer medical costs and fewer missed days from work, compared with people who didn’t participate in the yoga program. Alan Silman, who funded the study, stated, “not only has yoga been found to help people manage their back pain, but that it is also cost effective and results in fewer sick days. It is another option for people who are struggling to manage their condition, and one that encourages the move to self- management” (University of York, 2012).

## 2.11 Case Examples

Real life experiences are great examples for understanding what effect a yoga-program can have on personal health, but also on the overall outcome of a company. In the first example, entrepreneur Pravin Kothari talks from his own experience about the effects yoga had on his health and the positive outcomes it gave to the multimillion dollar worth companies he has founded. Kothari is the patent holder for several security technologies and is a very successful technology founder in Silicon Valley. However, building up companies from the start can lead into stressful times as he explains in an interview

with Forbes (Slade, 2014): “In 2004, I experienced a stress- induced digestive system disorder. My doctor informed that I would need to quit startups and take daily medication for the rest of my life to counter the condition.” Coming to the conclusion that taking daily medication was not an option he wanted to do longterm, Kothari started his path of recovery with the help of yoga. After practicing yoga on a daily basis, the entrepreneur was at full recovery after only one year and he was no longer dependent on medication. Today he manages to practice yoga methods for 30-45 minutes a day, in combination with meditation. Kothari reveals that it is the practice of deep breathing, pranayama, which has the most powerful affect on his mind and stress level. The story from this entrepreneur can be reviewed as a case example of how yoga can positively affect your health and bring successful achievement to your business.

Another case example is from the organization Sandia National Laboratories, which is an American security laboratory with 8,300 employees. This organization offers free yoga classes at their on-site fitness center. The company reveals that the yoga program has been a great success and employees consistently attend the free yoga classes. One of the benefits of attending a yoga class is that it does not require a shower afterward. This is much appreciated by employees who don’t have much free time (Carlos Shepherd, 2009, p.36).

## 3 Empirical Methods

In this chapter, the thesis introduces the used methodological choices, pre-understanding of the author, introduction to the field project with Nettyoga, study purpose, along with the total results from the survey and interview.

### 3.1 Pre-understanding of the author

I am a person who possesses a deep knowledge of yoga methods and the benefits it can provide people who suffer from stress or other psychological issues. My studies of yoga science started at the age of 13 when I was part of a tennis team and yoga asanas was mandatory once a week. When I reached the age of 22, I began to fully understand the potential of yoga science and how it can support human psychological issues. In 2009, I started law studies at the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich, but after two years I came to the conclusion that I needed to drop out in order to better concentrate on my physical and mental health. I was looking for a strategy to overcome the psychological issues I had at that time; and since my interest in yoga had remained strong and passionate for many years, I decided to travel to India and learn more about yoga science.

I learned all the relevant yoga methods such as asanas, meditation and pranayama from a program consisting of 200 hours of teacher training. After succeeding and receiving my yoga teacher diploma in India, I returned to Munich and started my bachelor degree in International and European Management in 2012. While studying, I started a new job as a customer service agent and translator for Insparx, a company that provides Internet dating services. During this time, I started to feel stress due to time pressure and my personal yoga practice began to vanish. My job was signed under a freelancer contract, which meant I did not have specific working hours, but only duties to fulfill and deadlines to meet. I quickly experienced high levels of stress as I tried to fulfill all my deadlines and also attend my study classes every day. Although I was familiar with every positive effect the practice of yoga could give me, I didn't follow any personal yoga-program and I lost myself in the studying and working. Factors such as time pressure, work overload and work attitude resulted in symptoms of burnout in the end. I got to a point where I considered my job as meaningless, and I purposefully avoided my colleagues. Tasks that I was assigned to accomplish were usually completed and delivered after their deadlines. The symptoms of burnout began to appear after a year of feeling stressed on a daily basis. In this period of my life, I experienced low self-esteem as I continued mentally punishing myself for not accomplishing my work tasks before the deadlines and also for not studying my University material enough. The human mind is an immensely strong force and one is able to accomplish

great things with a focused determination; but in the process of living a busy daily life, one must not forget the importance of body and health. Mind and body will always be connected. When one is under hard conditions, negative consequences will start to appear in both. Lack of energy, insomnia and feelings of depression were my health consequences. During the summer of 2013, the personal realization and deep understanding of my condition came to me. I had only two options: change something, or continue on the path of self-destruction. After making the decision to finally change something, I began to practice yoga asanas, meditation and conscious breathing again on a daily basis. Whenever I would feel symptoms of stress or low self-esteem, I reacted by practicing techniques of meditation and pranayama. These are techniques you can practice at any time and feel an instant effect. After only three months, I was a completely change person. The personal yoga-program that I followed helped me to wake up every morning and feel excited about starting that new day. All symptoms of low self-esteem and habits of avoiding the work office disappeared. Tasks were being delivered before the deadlines, and my work performance improved. What I have learned from my stress and burnout experience is the fact that people tend to neglect or forget the importance of health. Our world has become a place where people push themselves to meet the expectations of other people. Meanwhile, the most important person anyone should listen to is often being ignored, and that person is oneself. Why is it so easy to forget to listen to your body? Why is it so easy to let your mind manipulate you? Stress and burnout do this to you; both conditions cause you to forget the importance of being mentally and physically healthy. Shouldn't your health be the first priority and not your workplace?

### **3.2 Case Research Project: *Nettyoga***

In the search of finding a project for the empirical research, the author looked for a yoga program that was already being offered in the workplace and can be. Nettyoga is an example of such a program, which already exists as a program for Stress Management. Choosing *Nettyoga* for this field research project resulted therefore in being a great decision.

*Nettyoga* is a Norwegian online yoga studio where you chose what type of yoga videos to follow. Because it offers you online videos, the possibility of practicing yoga is always with you. All of the published videos are created with the same philosophy; right breathing, right exercising, right eating, right thoughts and right rest. The yoga videos are divided into five sections: flow, stretch, office yoga, strength and medical yoga. Every video contains a clear description and information on the yoga techniques, which is presented. Nettyoga has made it very easy for subscribers, you can search for videos with the help of the criteria's: yoga style, length, level, category, and equipment. In

addition, Nettyoga is also firm believing that yoga techniques are a great aid tool for reducing stress-symptoms and eliminating burnout. According to the site, office yoga can reduce 50% of sick leave, which is caused by workplace problems. The yoga videos for office workers lasts between 5 to 15 minutes and is recommended to be followed every day if you are struggling with any health issues.

### **3.2.1 Research purpose**

The aim for this thesis is to understand the effect a yoga program has on people who suffer from health problems in the workplace, such as stress and burnout. The author has therefore collected data from people who confirm to have, or have had, psychological problems, and who also proclaim to be practitioners of yoga methods. The author chose to gather information based the general trend, as well as personal experience, with the help of a survey. To efficiently gather as much data possible, the survey was shared and presented on Nettyoga's Facebook page. Nettyoga also included the survey in the monthly email newsletter to all of their subscribers. In addition, an interview was organized with the creator of Nettyoga, to gain a deeper understanding of the detailed relationship between yoga and stress/ burnout. The main purpose is to document the effectiveness of yoga practiced by employees, in combination with in-depth information from an expert. The authors' aim for the study is also to analyse the effectiveness of yoga methods as part of a program in stress management. In the end of the study, the thesis will give a conclusion on the effectiveness of adopting yoga techniques into the employees every day life.

### **3.2.2 Research approach**

The author's explanation of the research approach is based on the information retrieved from the Directorate for Education and Human Resources (2002, p. 47). This research is designed with a mixed-method approach and includes qualitative and quantitative methodology. When human behavior and attitudes are investigated, the most profitable approach can be through using a variety of data collection methods. The author has therefore used both interview and survey as a mixture for the research design. One strong argument for using this type of design is the strength of the conclusion at the end. With different sources and methods, an increase of validity and reliability can be achieved. The same phenomenon is researched with two methods to conduct a sharper understanding of the findings. In this design, the author has started with a quantitative segment in the form of a survey, followed by an in depth interview. Although it can possibly create problems if sources don't agree with each other, the mixed-approach method for this research was not affected by that possibility. The

combination of a broad-based survey and an in depth interview was able to contribute to the aim of researching with both qualitative and quantitative methods.

### 3.2.3 Research questions

- Who is mostly affected by stress and burnout?
- To what extent does a yoga program influence the work performance, work motivation, workplace satisfaction, physical wellbeing and mental wellbeing of employees?
- What relationship can be found between the use of yoga program and the health problems stress, burnout, depression, tiredness, neck/ back pain and headache?
- Should yoga be integrated as a program in Stress Management?

### 3.2.4 Data collection method: Survey

Surveys are popular to use because they help to gather information from large groups of people, individually. A survey's construction can be created in different ways, but the components of questions and responses are always present. For the survey in this research, a *close-ended* approach was adopted in order to collect responses from a predetermined answer field. Important factors considered in the planning of the survey were the complexity of questions, the project's schedule and the availability of resources. Ten questions were carefully created for the survey with the intention to motivate more people to participate. For this survey, questions were in the form of a rating scale and given categories (Directorate for Education and Human Resources, 2002, p. 49). The online program used to create the survey was from Monkey Survey and was selected because it can easily provide organized results from a large number of survey-takers. While preparing the survey, a main goal was established. The purpose was to collect information from the range of people who suffer (currently or previously) from psychosocial problems and who also practice yoga techniques. An additional goal was to find specifically how yoga positively influenced work factors such as work performance and job satisfaction.

The first part of the survey, questions 1-4, was designed to understand who was participating. The author, therefore, asked questions about gender, age, work situation and the type of workplace the participant is a part of. Questions 5-8 were created in order to collect information on the type of psychological issues the participant has dealt with, as



well as their yoga history. Participants were asked to choose between health problems such as stress, burnout, depression, reduced energy level, neck and back pain, headache and none. A multi-problem option was also a choice, including four of the issues: depression, reduced energy level, neck/ back pain, and headache. These issues are often outcomes from stress-symptoms or burnout, and are often experienced in combination with each other. Question six asked the participant to tell how long yoga practices had been a part of their life. In number seven, the author wanted to find out how many times per week yoga was being practiced, and question eight inquired *where* the yoga was usually practiced. The aim of questions one to eight of the survey was to see what type of personal profile could be found. In question nine, the author wanted to know to what degree yoga actually helped with different health problems. For each health problem, the participant could select to answer *extremely, strongly, a little, very little, not at all* or *not a health problem of mine*. The last question of the survey, question ten, was to collect data on how effective yoga techniques are on the motivation for work, workplace satisfaction, work performance, physical well-being and mental well-being. The same varying answer options from question nine, were given for question ten. The full questionnaire can be found in appendix A.

### 3.2.5 Data collection method: Interview

Surveys may provide a general picture, but they also sometimes show a lack of depth. The author's attempt for the thesis is to provide a conclusion with a certain depth. An interview can therefore help with reaching a deeper understanding of the selected topic and add new information to the research.

For the interview, an expert and experienced person in yoga, workplace stress and burnout were invited for an online conversation, as part of the interview method. "The interview is a research interview, designed for the purpose of improving knowledge. It is a special type of conversational interaction and it is to go matters 'in depth' "(Wengraf, 2001, p. 3).

One of the most important things the author wanted to find out with the research, was the effectiveness of yoga on people's motivation for working, workplace satisfaction, work performance, physical well-being and mental well-being. Our hypothesis suggested these factors would be positively affected by yoga methods, thus them being selected for the survey.

The interview was conducted over an online chat program with, Anne Simone Kensho, the owner and entrepreneur of NettYoga.no. Kensho has 16 years of working experience in the Norwegian Armed Forces, department of intelligence and battalion. Some of her main working tasks used to be in the operational services, management and

education areas. Today she is 41 years old and has practiced yoga since 2004. In 2013, she became a certified medical yoga teacher and her current profession entails working with yoga, holding courses and speeches for organizations, and teaching yoga in private and studio style classes.

### 3.2.6 Total results of survey

In this section, the thesis introduces the results from the. Only the most relevant results from the survey will be given in the format a graphics.

Survey responses were conducted between 07.05.2015 and 27.05.2015, with a result of 58 total participants. The participants were retrieved from Nettyoga's Facebook Fanpage and monthly e-mail newsletter. On 27.05.2015 the Facebook Fanpage had 1660 followers and the monthly newsletter stated to have 145 subscribers, a total of 1805 possible participants. This gives the survey a 3.2 % Answer rate. In this period of time, the survey was posted three times on the Facebook Fanpage and sent one time as a link in the e-mail newsletter.

Out of the 58 participants, 50 are female and 8 are male. The age group is from 20 years to over 50 years old. The table below shows the age that was collected from the participants. There is currently no demographical statistic on the people practicing with Nettyoga. According to Kensho, there is no exact statistic on age group of the members of Nettyoga. However, after these results were presented to Kensho in the interview, the creator of Nettyoga concludes that the numbers shown below are almost identical with her own member preferences. She also states that because she and her co-workers personally know many of the members and companies of Nettyoga, the survey results are representative.

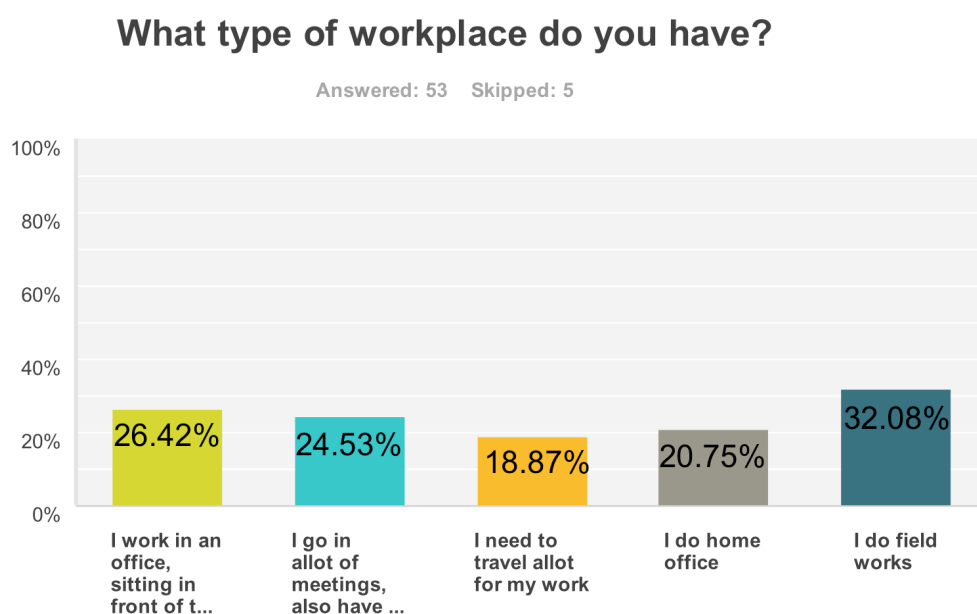
20-30 (years old)	32,76%	19
31-40	39,66%	23
41-50	18,97%	11
Over 50	8,62%	5

In terms of working situation, the answer choices were divided between full-time, halftime, unemployed, sick leave and freelancer. 27 people answered full-time with 46.55%. 8 people with the percentage of 13.79% selected halftime. Unemployed and

sick leave both had a 6.9% response. And 15 people said they work as a freelancer with a 25.86%.

*Next question on the survey: What type of workplace do you have?*

According to the survey, 26.42% (14 people) said they work in an office, sitting in front of a computer all day. 24.53% (13 people) said they go to a lot of meetings and have their own work desk in a company or organization. 18.87% (10 people) need to travel a lot for their work. 20.75% (11 people) answered that they work from home, and 32.08% (17 people) selected “field work” as their workplace environment. Not all of the 58 participants gave an answer to this question. 5 participants chose to skip it.



*Figure 4 Workplace of the participants*

In the question asking about the type of health problems they were currently experiencing or have had in the past, the total response rate was 100%. Participants of the survey were allowed to select multiple answers for this question.

## What type of health problem(s) do you consider to have or have had in the past?

Answered: 58 Skipped: 0

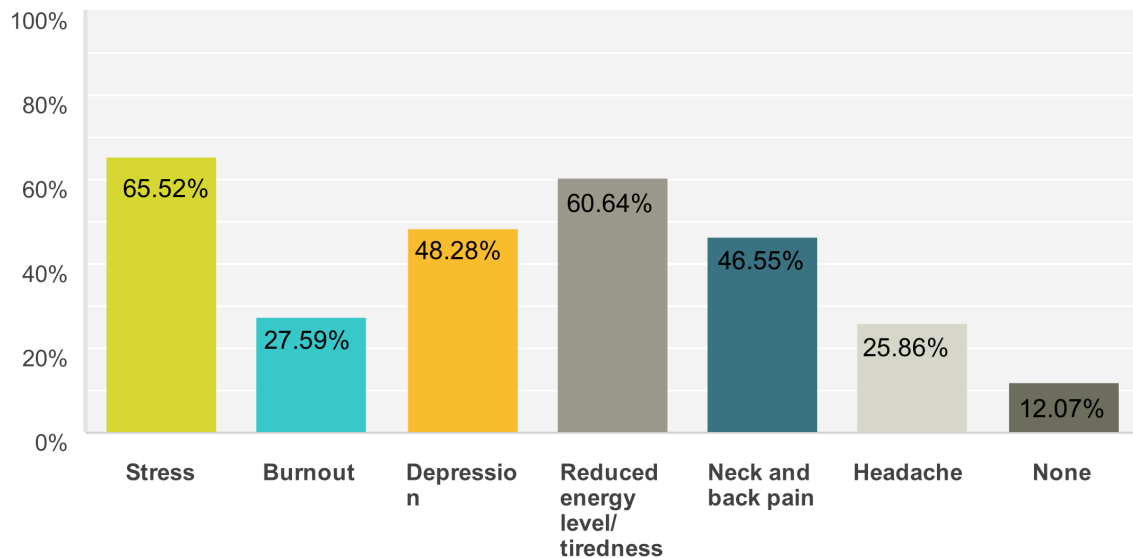


Figure 5 Health problems from survey participants

The graphic above shows what type of health problems the participants were currently struggling with or have had. 65.52% said they have a relation to stress, 27.59% said burnout is a health problem for them, and 48.28% have been affected by depression. Reduced energy levels or tiredness is a well-known problem for 60.34% of the participants, whereas neck and back pain has been experienced by 46.55% of them. Headaches were an issue for 25.86% and 12% said they have no connection to the health problems listed.

The next graphic is showing the yoga history of the participants. Only one person did not contribute to the result. A total of 49 people said they have practiced yoga for more than one year, which is 85.96%. Only 2 people said they have been practicing for 1 to 4 weeks, and another two said 5 to 8 weeks.



Figure 6 The yoga experience of survey participants

The table below shows how the respondents feel yoga has affected their working motivation, workplace satisfaction, works performance, physical wellbeing and mental wellbeing. According to the survey, physical wellbeing and mental wellbeing are the two conditions that are the most positively affected by yoga. Work performance, workplace satisfaction and working motivation are all improved by yoga as well, with most participants answering that they are extremely or strongly affected.

	Extremely	Strongly	A little	Very little	None at all	Total	Weighted Average
working motivation	30.36% 17	39.29% 22	26.79% 15	3.57% 2	0.00% 0	56	2.04
workplace satisfaction	28.57% 16	41.07% 23	21.43% 12	5.36% 3	3.57% 2	56	2.14
work performance	28.57% 16	51.79% 29	19.64% 11	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	56	1.91
physical well-being	68.42% 39	28.07% 16	1.75% 1	1.75% 1	0.00% 0	57	1.37
mental well-being	68.42% 39	24.56% 14	5.26% 3	0.00% 0	1.75% 1	57	1.42

Figure 7 Influence of yoga on emotional and physical conditions

The table below shows the participants' realization of the effect yoga has on their different health problems. According to the survey, almost half of the people who suffer

from stress think yoga has extremely helped them with reducing it, and 33.93% say it has strongly helped them.

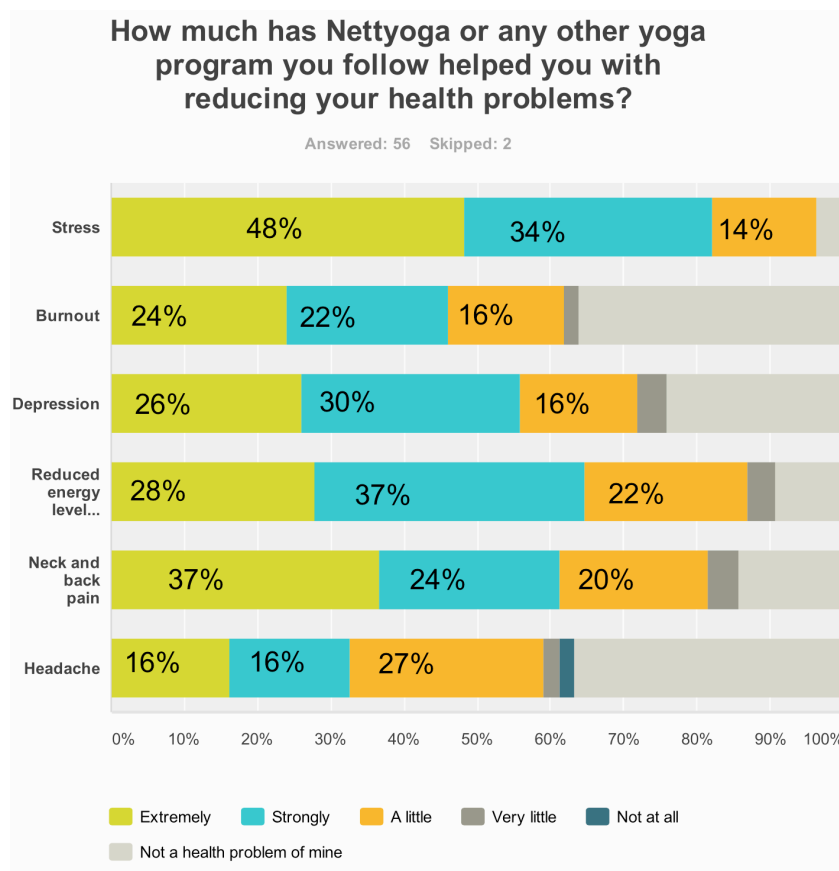


Figure 8 Influence of yoga on health problems

### 3.2.7 Total results of interview

For the interview, the author and Kensho both agreed on using an online chat program as the communication tool. In the interview conversation, Kensho began by talking about her personal experience with stress and burnout.

"I was a victim of burnout for almost six years. My burnout came from a combination of stress and unhealthy eating choices. It was a difficult time for me. I used to constantly have a high stress level, which eventually became such a normal state of being for me that I didn't even recognize it as stress anymore. At that time, I didn't think I was stressed, but I was. The stress drained me of my energy and my performance level at work was decreasing more and more. My personal relationships also became more difficult to handle."

An important aspect of this thesis is the concept of adopting yoga methods into Stress Management programs. Kensho gave her opinion on why yoga can be very relevant in Stress Management.

"I believe yoga is well suited for Stress Management if you have appropriate methods and a good program to follow. Yoga works on the core issue of stress and all the things that cause stress. It is not about learning methods for living with stress symptoms. Yoga works on a much deeper level and targets the root problems of stress. I am referring to practices that show a physiological impact on the entire body, including the nervous system, hormone system, and even the spiritual realm of a person. The spiritual aspect is important because it is based on basic life philosophy and psychology. That is why yoga feels authentic and right to anyone, no matter who you are or where you are from. From my own personal experience with yoga and meditation, I have gained a stronger health. Overall, I feel much better, more awake and well-balanced. Yoga creates a mental clarity for you. Yoga can help reduce sick leaves and increase productivity, and practicing it on a regular basis will contribute to an increased quality of life. I have experienced all of this myself and I receive the same feedback from my yoga students."

Because Kensho works with companies and holds speeches about the effectiveness of yoga, the author asked what important aspects an organization should know before creating a yoga-program for employees. The most important things a company should think about when planning to offer yoga to their employees, according to Kensho:

1. What do they want to achieve with yoga classes? Is it to reduce stress, gain physical fitness or something else? It is important to have clear communication among your staff in order to find the right type of yoga teacher and to create the best suitable program for all of your employees.
2. Yoga should be practiced on a regular basis that means minimum once per week.
3. Yoga is for everybody. It does not matter your gender, age, athletic history, or level of flexibility. You don't need to wonder if practicing yoga will fit you are not, because it will.

Kensho revealed that she has not observed clear patterns showing certain people that are most affected by stress. "I cannot see any consistency in the kind of people who are the most affected by stress. It seems to me that everyone is struggling with stress these days, but it is different when it comes to burnout. Different types of people are victims of burnout, but not everybody is at risk of developing burnout. The problem with

stress, though, is that most people don't see for themselves that they are under high stress levels. They have lost their reference point for experiencing a lifestyle without frequent or heavy stress. Additionally, many people do not know that stress can come from pain, unknown allergies or other types of intolerance. These circumstances can create an inner stress in the body, which often feels like an inner turmoil, which then develops into a feeling of fatigue. The culture we live in today is also affecting the general health condition of the population. Western countries have many welfare diseases, which are caused by refined foods, including the fast-food many people eat. These food-related issues can create outer and inner stress, which in some cases also leads to burnout.

This study also focuses on the relationship between yoga and employee outcome. In the interview, Kensho said she receives positive responses regarding organizational outcomes:

"Companies are giving me feedback that their yoga program is helping them, but it is difficult to precisely and directly measure the relationship. However, some people have reported that they feel a notable difference after having only practiced yoga and meditation a couple of times. Many of the companies I work with have also said that the yoga program has shown to have a positive effect on the work performance, working motivation, job satisfaction, and mental and physical health of their employees."

In terms of offering a yoga program that gives effective results, Kensho believes that "the best combination is to practice the physical part of yoga along with a focus on the life philosophy and spiritual aspects of it. This will have the greatest overall impact on one's quality of life, job satisfaction and working motivation."



## 4 Analysis and other research findings

The study attempts to present management strategies by identifying psychological problems in employees and proposing a stress management yoga program for improving the working conditions.

Numerous research studies can be found that focus on the effectiveness of yoga. In this chapter, the thesis compiles other research findings that are in great relevance to the field project of Nettyoga. The aim for this chapter is to analyze the responses from our empirical findings and also provide examples from other research studies. In addition, ideas for creating a yoga-program are presented.

### 4.1 Analysis of survey

In chapter 2 we documented different sources, which conclude that stress and burnout are psychological issues that are growing worldwide. In our study, the results showed that 65% of the respondents are dealing with stress symptoms, and depression is stated as a problem for nearly 50% of them. The results are showing that health issues such as stress, burnout, depression, fatigue, neck and back pain, and headaches are serious health issues in the workplace. This means that the majority of working people today are strongly affected by psychosocial problems. It is not to suggest that every person is affected by health problems, but the results indicate that the likelihood of developing depression and heavy stress symptoms are at a high.

In the process of analyzing the effectiveness of a yoga program, results show that people tend to practice either 1-2 times a week, or more than 4 times a week. The research observation is that regular yoga practice is important for receiving positive effects from the yoga-program. 85.96% of those surveyed said they have been practicing yoga for more than a year. A regular practice over longer time is of great importance for reducing stress and eliminating burnout in employees.

63.79% said they practice yoga at home and 67.24% said at a studio, whereas only 17.24% said they practice at the workplace. The thesis suggests there is a great possibility for high improvement when adopting yoga as part of a Stress Management program at the workplace. 63.79% already say they practice at home and this can either be from following videos from Nettyoga or from another personal yoga program. The effect of using a yoga method as a helping tool for reducing health problems shows to be a profound suggestion. 48.21% said yoga has helped them extremely with reducing stress symptoms, and 33.93% said it has been strongly effective. The effect of using yoga methods for stress reduction is almost a guaranty. The same can be suggested

for burnout. 27.9% said burnout is a health issue for them and from these, 24% feel that yoga methods have been extremely helpful and 22% said it was strongly helpful in the process of eliminating burnout. Almost half of the burnout victims have experienced great positive effects from practicing yoga. Depression and reduced energy levels are also showing great improvement through the methods of yoga.

Another important aspect the thesis is emphasising is the effect yoga has on company outcomes. In order for a company or organisation to preserve the best possible results, it is extremely important to have the most healthy and effective employees possible. To find the relationship between a company's productivity outcome and incorporated yoga methods, the research focused on the factors of working motivation, workplace satisfaction, work performance, physical wellbeing and mental wellbeing as measurements. All the responses agree that yoga has a positive effect on the working motivation, work performance and physical wellbeing. Only 3 people said workplace satisfaction and mental wellbeing had not been positively affected through a yoga program. When calculating the responses of those saying that yoga had very little or no effect on the given emotional and physical states, the result is of such small matter in the overall result. We therefore suggest with the results of the survey, that yoga has a strong to extremely positive effect on working motivation, workplace satisfaction, work performance, physical wellbeing and mental wellbeing when a program is followed on a regular basis for at least one year.

The majority (86.21%) of the survey participants are female. Reviewing this result, it leads to the interpretation that yoga is more popular with females than with men. Through personal observation, a belief can be found in the general population that is a wrong interpretation of yoga. For most men, yoga is seen as a "female" practice and there are actually some factors that support this misunderstanding. Western people have the tendency to think yoga is a practice for somebody who is especially flexible. The survey result, showing which gender usually practices yoga methods, amplifies the wrong perspective most people have of yoga. It also suggests that most males are not aware of the medical impact yoga can have on their psychological and physical issues. Yoga can have a positive effect on stress and burnout and be a very beneficial tool for both sexes. The author suggests a change in the general public's association of yoga as a primarily female activity.

The results of the field research might be valuable for organizations, which want to increase their productivity and decrease the sick leave of their employees. Human Resource Managers can be prepared for company statistics that show high numbers of employees suffering from stress symptoms and burnout when between the ages of 20 and 40 years old. Although the survey shows responses primarily from females, the number of males suffering from psychosocial problems is suggested to be just as high

as it is for females. The author believes that the low percentage of male survey participants is a result of the targeted study group. The survey was presented to the Facebook followers of Nettyoga. The site does not provide gender statistics of their followers, but the author suggests that most followers are females.

## 4.2 Analysis of interview

The information that was given by Kensho in the interview is also referring yoga methods as a great strategy for a program in Stress Management. Through personal experience and feedback from clients, Kensho states that there is positive progress in reducing stress and eliminating burnout when a person follows a yoga program.

Together with the survey, both research methods conclude that stress is a general condition amongst the population of today, and everyone should be aware of the consequences it yields. But instead of using stress management strategies that only temporarily reduce stress symptoms in employees, using methods of yoga can help in the process of actually understanding the root cause of stress and burnout. Kensho is pointing out an important idea, the spiritual aspect of yoga. The idea is not only to influence people to take part in yoga practices, but also to encourage them in developing a new consciousness, a new way of thinking, a new state of mind. Through physical practice of Hatha Yoga and a fitting teacher to provide guidance, the psychological problems of employees can not only be eliminated, but they can also be understood on a deeper conscious level. By understanding and dealing with the root cause of a problem, chances of experiencing a relapse can be extremely reduced.

According to Kensho, organizations and companies can gain tremendous positive outcomes by offering yoga-programs for their employees. The way it works is to encourage employees to take better care of their health by offering an inviting yoga-program. Employees will experience a difference in their physical and mental well-being, which activates a new level of consciousness. Yoga methods works on the relationship between mind and body, a link which shows great impact on work performance, work motivation and job satisfaction.

For Kensho, an important part of adapting yoga into Stress Management is to provide some knowledge of the spiritual aspects. This type of spiritual awareness can be experienced with the right teacher, which is a very important factor of the yoga-program. The thesis suggested in chapter 2 that organizations must understand their employees on several levels in order to invite the perfect yoga teacher for the program. Spiritual awareness is not to be understood as a form of religion in this context, but more as an awakening for the human consciousness. A lot of people ignore or are unaware of the fact that they are suffering from stress or burnout. By teaching yoga theories that have

been conducted on spiritual experiences, an improved deeper level of consciousness can be achieved.

It is not only the physical practice of yoga that results in psychological improvement. The theories and philosophies of yoga are valuable information and can equally help employees in repairing and reducing their health problems.

The problem which also needs to be discussed is the misunderstanding and misinterpretation of yoga science that many people have. If organizations and departments of Human Resource Development should even consider offering a yoga-program to their employees, a much deeper understanding of yoga as an aid tool is extremely important to achieve. Researches done on the effectiveness of yoga are growing and it is theses like this one that can help to state a clear understanding of yoga science and of the potential it has to greatly benefit the workplace.

### **4.3 Other research findings**

A great number of research projects have been done that test the effectiveness of yoga science when practiced by healthy or unhealthy people. In this section, the thesis presents research findings that can be of great help in the understanding of yoga's potential for being a stress management program in the workplace.

An article posted by Yoga Journal (Wolfson, 2007) claims that more people have started to realize the beneficial impact yoga can have on a job, and people feel more focused and experience a greater job satisfaction through practicing yoga. In the same article, a statement from the researchers of the Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center is documented; yoga in conjunction with meditation can with guarantee reduce stress and be a positive impact on work performance. Another study, which was done by the Alternative Medicine Review, found evidence of a significant decrease in stress or anxiety symptoms when people were enrolled in a yoga- program. The study underwent analysis on 35 trials and 25 of them could document that yoga shows an immense effect on decreasing stress and anxiety (Slade, 2014). A study done by Swedish researchers on medical yoga shows a positive example. The patients had stress-related symptoms and were diagnosed in Primary health care. For this study, 37 people practiced yoga for one hour a week, for 12 weeks. Scores from the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) showed a significant improvement for the group practicing yoga, compared with the control group that did not practice any yoga once the study had ended. A significant difference between the groups can also be discovered when the anxiety and depression symptoms are compared. There is no significant difference between groups in terms of depression, but the anxiety symptoms decreased more in the yoga group than in the control group (Köhn et al., 2013).

Another research study was created to examine the impact of a full adoption of the yoga way of life on the emotional intelligence (EI) of Indian managers. The five components of emotional intelligence at work are stated in the research paper as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skill. 42 managers were selected for the yoga group and another 42 for the control group. Since the research goal was to analyze yoga as a way of life, the managers in the first group were asked to follow an intense yoga-program for six weeks. Participants attended a daily yoga class for 75 minutes, in addition to a total of 25 hours of theory lectures on the philosophy of yoga, which were spread over the six weeks. Managers in the control group had training of regular physical exercise for an equal amount of time, and lectures on the success factors of a life based on modern thought. What is very interesting with this study is the remarkable result the yoga group showed on the EI scale after only six weeks of living “the yoga life”. Participants rated the extent to which they agreed with each item on a 7-point type scale. 1 represents *strongly disagree*, and 7 *strongly agree* on a 33-item EI scale. The average EI score of the yoga group showed 5.5 before starting the yoga program, and 5.97 after completing the six weeks. In the control group, the numbers went from 5.61 to 5.55, which shows a decrease of EI. Overall, this study shows that a yoga way of life can be useful for the enhancement of the emotional intelligence of an employee (Adhia, Nagendra & Mahadevan, 2010).

Another study examined in India, also suggests the positive effectiveness yoga and meditation can have on employees. In this example, researchers wanted to combat the burnout risk for software developers. They analyzed the effect of yoga and meditation on work performance, organizational commitment, and interpersonal relationships. According to this research, practicing yoga and meditation is an “influential buffer against the association of job burnout with work-related outcomes” (Singh, Suar & Leiter, 2012, p. 96).

Studies such as those conducted by Hartfiel et al. (2011), Carlson et al. (2004), Cowen and Adams (2005) and Michalsen et al. (2012) suggest that stress-symptoms can be significantly reduced when a yoga-program is part of the human life. In the study by Hartfiel et al., a positive effect on the emotional wellbeing and resilience to stress was documented after only a six-week program of yoga. But according to Lavey et al., even one yoga class can have a “significant effect on improving mood among psychiatric inpatients. Patients were significantly less tense/anxious, less depressed/dejected, less angry/hostile, less confused/bewildered, and less fatigued after participating in a yoga class” (Lavey et al. 2005, cited in Hartfiel et al., 2011, p. 74).

According to Granath et al. (2006) a yoga-program can help reduce stress and is a promising method to use for stress management. Ganpat and Nagendra (2011) also suggest the positive effect yoga therapy can have on the improvement of mental

health. In the research from Ganpat and Nagendra, 72 corporate executives (63 males, 9 females) in the age group from 45 to 60 participated in a five day stress management program. The program was called Self-Management of Excessive Tension and is a yoga-based program designed with the intention to create a holistic way of life for employees. The research showed a decrease in the executives' somatic symptoms, anxiety, insomnia, social dysfunction and severe depression. In addition, all medical complaints also showed a decrease.

*This is an example from an American study that investigated the effects of yoga on employees. The study was done by researchers from the Division of General Internal Medicine at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester:*

The aim for this pilot study, where 50 employees participated, was to determine what effect a comprehensive, yoga- based wellness program had on the health and wellness of employees. Participants were enrolled in a six week program and met six days per week. Every session lasted for one hour and included yoga asanas, as well as philosophical dialogues and guidance on the purpose of mindfulness, breath, and meditation. At the end of the study, the results showed significant improvement in diastolic blood pressure, flexibility, body fat percentage and overall quality of life (Thomley et al., 2011, p. 27).

Yoga as an employer-sourced program has shown to be a great success in the US. In an article written by Carlson Shepherd (2009, p. 3), the benefits for the employees are documented to include stress relief, but also a special bonding experience is created. The workers come together in a way they usually would not, and this promotes trust and harmony between the workers.

A Japanese study compared the difference in mental states and urinary stress-related biochemical indices between females that are long-time yoga practitioners and those who are not experienced yoga participants. This study is an example for yoga and its impact on people who do not suffer from psychosocial problems. Yoshihara et al. (2011) demonstrated with the study that "long-time practitioners have lower mental disturbance, tension-anxiety, anger-hostility, and fatigue scores in the profile of mood test in comparison to non-experienced participants, although there were no significant differences in the levels of urinary stress-related markers. This is the first study to demonstrate that long-term yoga practitioners have a better mental state than healthy participants who do not engage in yoga" (Yoshihara et al., 2011).

## 4.4 Ideas and suggestions for yoga program in Stress Management strategies

In the process of integrating a yoga program as part of Stress Management strategies, different examples and ideas can now be taken into consideration based on previous results. Stress Managers should be aware of all the numerous possibilities there are in yoga programs. This thesis suggests that the following questions be asked.

- *What types of health problems can be observed in the workplace?* It is recommended that the organization hand out an anonymous survey to the employees. The results will indicate what health problems are mostly prevalent in the workplace and will be important knowledge for any possible yoga teacher that comes to the workplace. Specific health issues such as lower back pain, or neck problems can often be experienced by people who work long days in an office. It is important that the manager gets specific details from the employees on their health issues in order to give a selected yoga teacher an overall health status on the employees.

- *What kind of yoga should be offered in the workplace?* There is an immense variety of yoga types that a person can practice. As mentioned before, one of the most practiced forms of yoga is Hatha, which introduces a slower pace and easy asanas to follow in combination with breathing exercises. The thesis recommends Hatha yoga in the introduction of yoga to employees suffering from stress or burnout.

- *Who will be teaching the yoga lessons?* When introducing yoga to the workplace, a great percentage of the employees will most likely be trying yoga methods out for the first time. It is therefore very important that the people, who are responsible for Stress Management in the corporation or organization, are fully aware of the employees' background and condition in order to give them a positive first-time experience. Knowing your employees is the best approach to assure that you chose the right person to teach yoga in your workplace. The teaching styles can be very diverse. Some teachers might only use Sanskrit words in class; others wear small clothing pieces, which might send out the wrong signals to employees, and many yoga teachers present their classes in a heavily spiritual style. You need to ask yourself if you can introduce yoga classes to your employees, which include scented aromas, singing mantra verses or physical contact between teacher and student. Having the right yoga teacher is groundbreaking for the encouragement of adapting yoga into the employee's life.

- *Where do you offer the yoga classes?* For some people, it can be difficult to wake up one hour earlier in order to practice yoga before work, and others would love to start the day with an intensive yoga class. The thesis suggests that the organization ask the employees through a survey what time they would prefer to practice yoga. There are

numerous possibilities that can be arranged. Examples: Yoga program can be offered with a yoga teacher in the morning, during lunchtime, or after work. In addition, there are yoga programs that are offered online. With these, the employee has the ability to decide what type of program to follow, and when and where to do it. Cooperating with a studio nearby the office can also be a solution.

• *How many times must a person practice yoga methods in order to achieve positive effects in reducing stress?* Whenever a person starts practicing yoga or meditation for the first time, a seed is being planted inside them. How fast that seed grows depends on the individual person. The person may be highly motivated to practice and improve several times a week, or he or she may not fully believe in it and only give a slight effort. The progression of reducing personal stress levels will always be an individual process since every human being deals with problems in their own way. However, studies do suggest that practicing yoga can lead to short term positive effects very quickly. One example is a German study from 2005, where 25 emotionally distressed women visited a 90-minute yoga class twice a week for a total of six weeks. The participants reported improvements in their stress, depression, anxiety, energy, fatigue, and wellbeing. The scores of Depression showed an improvement by 50%, anxiety scores went down by 30% and the wellbeing scores improved by 65% (Harvard Medical School, 2009). The thesis suggests that employees should receive the offer and possibility of going to yoga classes at least twice a week. Giving the opportunity and encouragement to practice with online yoga videos is also a great solution that gives the employee the freedom to practice every day if desired.

The thesis also introduces the idea of creating a video to show employees information about the health consequences of stress and burnout, why the organization is concerned about their employees, and why a person should be concerned about his or her own mental and physical health. In addition, the film could show how techniques of yoga can prevent stress-symptoms and help eliminate burnout. By using visuals it can create an interest and understanding of the topic of yoga methods in relation to psychological problems. This idea can be sufficient for companies with a large number of employees, as one film can quickly and easily spread the same information to thousands of people. Organizations also have the possibility to invite a spokesperson or expert for holding a speech. If a company invites a speaker to talk about his own stress or burnout experience and then follow it with a demonstration of yoga techniques, this might be of great advantage. The employees could relate to the personal experience story and also see the yoga methods being performed live.



## 5 Summary

This chapter presents the conclusions of my research by giving a summary of the most important content from the whole thesis. The conclusions made are linked to my analysis and are also in consonance with my research aim. The goal is to have a clear understanding of how a yoga-program can affect psychosocial problems such as stress and burnout in the workplace and of the effectiveness of using yoga-program as part of Human Resource Management.

Based on the combination of my empirical study was done on Nettyoga and other research findings I have studied, I have reached the following conclusions: My empirical data is reliable to the extent that it helped me attain my aim which was to find out if yoga methods are useful as a program in Human Resources. My field study with Nettyoga and Anne Simone Kensho clearly made known the effectiveness of introducing yoga methods to employees and adopting a stress management yoga program in organizations. The thesis gives clear details for answering my research questions. The theoretical framework guided me to understand the symptoms, causes and consequences of stress and burnout, and how a yoga-program can be a successful Stress Management program. In the empirical findings, I was able to receive in-depth knowledge through an expert and also conduct measurements on the effectiveness of yoga with people suffering from stress or burnout. The analysis created a bridge between the theories from chapter two and the empirical findings, as well as other research findings. In the end, the thesis summarizes the effectiveness of using yoga methods as a management tool in companies or organizations.

### 5.1 Research conclusion

My research using mixed-methods of qualitative and quantitative methods was to understand the effectiveness of employees practicing yoga methods at the workplace, yoga studio or at home, as well as to understand the development of stress and burnout in the workplace. The findings of my research and a conclusion of my analysis results are summarized as follows.

I can conclude that irrelevant of the type of job, title or position, employees at any organization are always at high risk of experiencing stress. The employees feel workplace stress because of numerous reasons, often linked to workplace factors. The factors are not always linked to the workplace and can also be caused by internal factors such as personality or personal health issues. Burnout on the other hand is less registered in the workplace than stress. While stress is a problem of the general popu-

lation, burnout occurs only after living in extreme situations over a longer period of time.

With regards to theories and information collected from my own research and personal experiences, I present three main conclusions. These results from the research support the original hypothesis.

- *The more people practice yoga methods, the more symptoms of stress and burnout will be reduced.* I wanted to see if psychological problems found in the workplace, such as stress, depression and burnout could be reduced with the help of a yoga-program. I found several indications that led me to believe that yoga methods are a significant helping tool in Stress Management. My research and my findings from other studies all support the belief that yoga methods can help people to reduce any psychological issues they may be struggling with.
- *Work performance, work satisfaction, working motivation, physical wellbeing and mental wellbeing of the employees appear to improve in relationship with a yoga program.* I also add to my findings that emotional and physical factors show improvement with a yoga-program. Because yoga methods are influencing the human being in a holistic way, the physical wellbeing and the mental wellbeing will also be influenced. When the physical and the mental wellbeing of an employee are in balance, it results in an improved work performance, work satisfaction and working motivation.
- *Yoga-program can have a positive impact on organizational outcomes.* Since I could not directly measure the impact yoga has on organizational outcomes, my thesis is supported by personal experiences by Kensho and case examples stating the financial benefits from a yoga-program.

## 5.2 Implications

The contribution that this thesis emphasizes is in two concept areas: the understanding of the prevalence/ hindrance of stress and burnout in the workplace; and yoga program as a management strategy. From my findings and research I think stress and burnout should receive more attention from management forces and employees. In addition, I believe the knowledge of yoga science and its potential should be taken into consideration more often by human resources.

From all the present research studies that have been conducted on yoga science, most of them conclude that yoga methods are positive. Although yoga is often seen as something helpful for the mind and body, there are still an immense number of people

who are unaware of the effect and influence yoga science can have to the many aspects of the human life.

### **5.3 Suggestion for future research**

Numerous of studies can be found with data and analysis on the effectiveness of yoga, but the thesis thinks none of them goes deep enough into the research topic. In order to truly understand yoga science with the help of Meta analysis, future researches must include higher numbers of participants and long-term observation. Credible results and validity are key solutions for understanding the impact of yoga on a comprehensive level. As of today, the numbers of participants in study researches often tend to be below 50. The thesis therefor suggests continuing with experimenting and adopting yoga techniques to workplace settings, but increasing sample size of the study groups.

As of today, the number of participants in research studies often tends to be fewer than 50 people. The author suggests continuing with experimenting with and adopting yoga techniques into workplace settings but increasing the sample size of the study groups. The thesis also suggests creating research that directly links the treatment of burnout with practicing yoga methods, and having long-time observations of emotional intelligence. To truly discover the effectiveness of yoga-program on employees, future research should focus on qualitative data sampled from observations done for a minimum of one year. Collecting experimental data from a subject such as yoga is challenging, but future research studies cannot only be built on quantitative data. I also suggest that future research focus more on yoga as a way of life and not only on yoga as a short term or single faceted program. To truly understand the powerful effectiveness of yoga, future researchers must complete long-term observations of healthy people practicing a lifestyle of yoga methods, in addition, observe study groups with only male participants.

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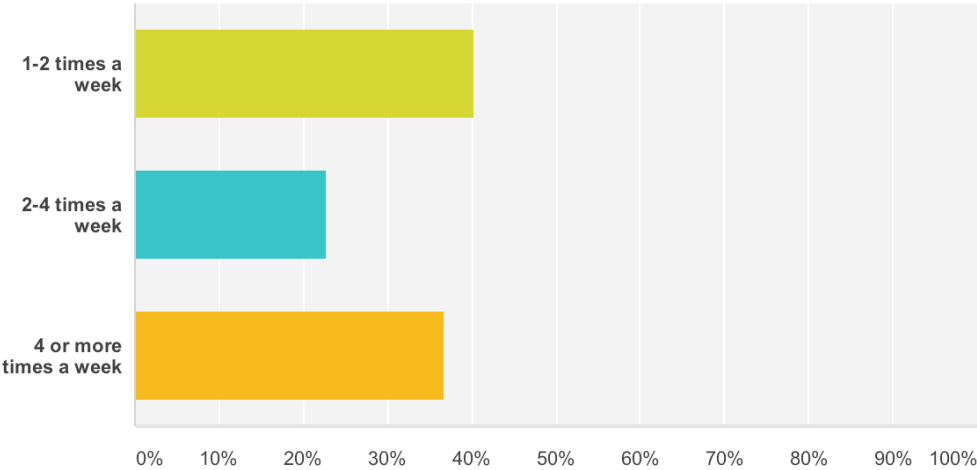
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Appendix

How many times in one week do you practice yoga/ breathing exercises?

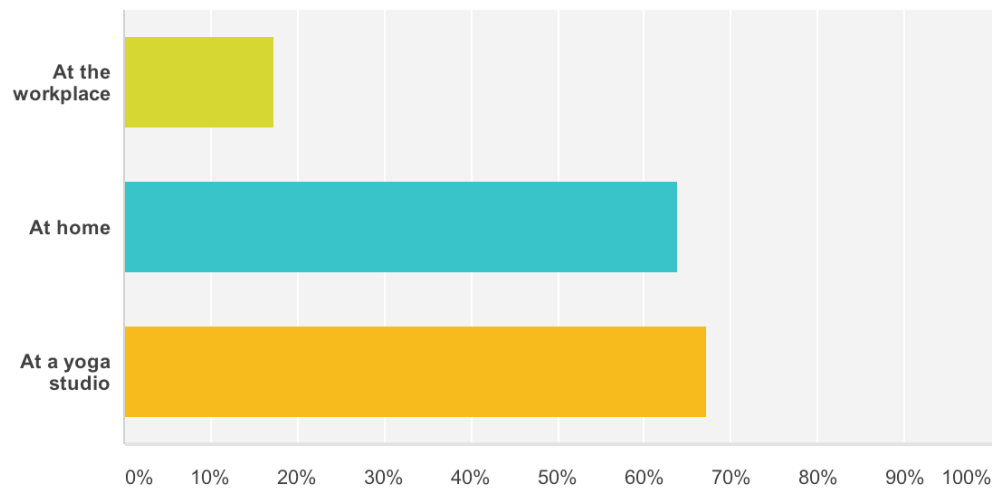
Answered: 57 Skipped: 1



Answer Choices	Responses	
1-2 times a week	40.35%	23
2-4 times a week	22.81%	13
4 or more times a week	36.84%	21
Total	57	

## Where do you usually practice yoga/ breathing exercises?

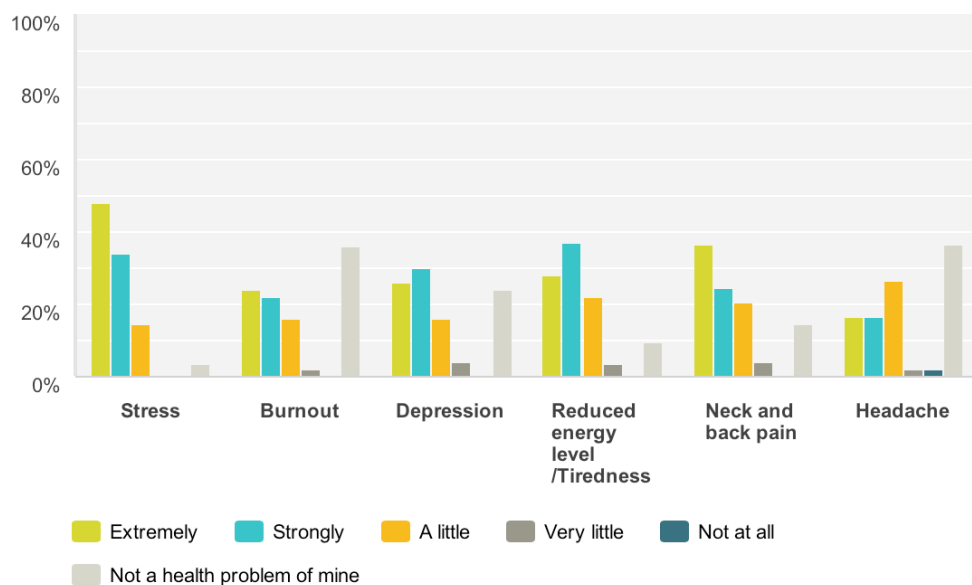
Answered: 58 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
At the workplace	17.24% 10
At home	63.79% 37
At a yoga studio	67.24% 39
Total Respondents: 58	

## How much has Nettyoga or any other yoga program you follow helped you with reducing your health problems?

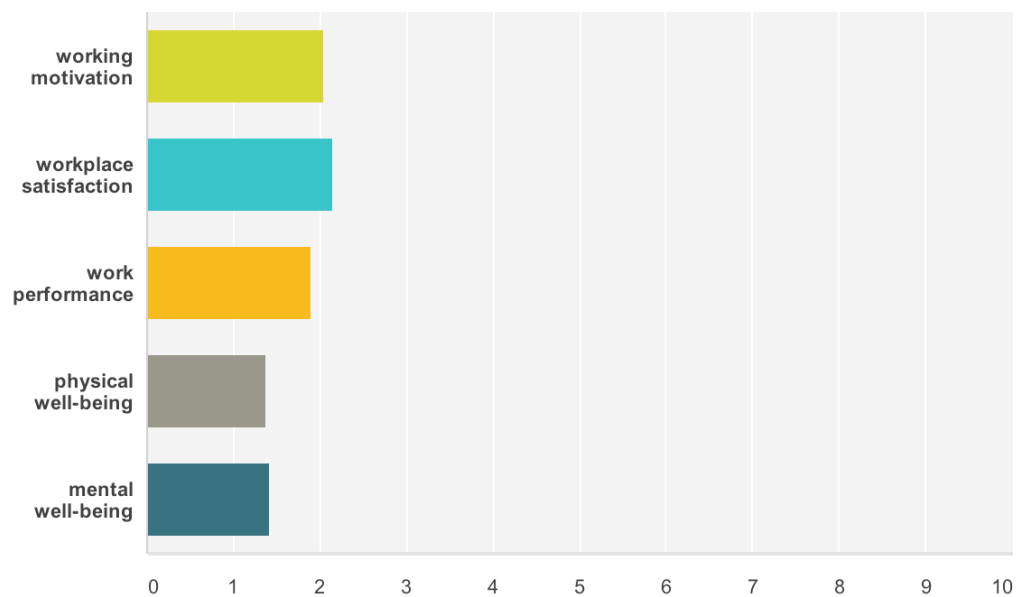
Answered: 56 Skipped: 2



	Extremely	Strongly	A little	Very little	Not at all	Not a health problem of mine	Total
Stress	48.21% 27	33.93% 19	14.29% 8	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	3.57% 2	56
Burnout	24.00% 12	22.00% 11	16.00% 8	2.00% 1	0.00% 0	36.00% 18	50
Depression	26.00% 13	30.00% 15	16.00% 8	4.00% 2	0.00% 0	24.00% 12	50
Reduced energy level /Tiredness	27.78% 15	37.04% 20	22.22% 12	3.70% 2	0.00% 0	9.26% 5	54
Neck and back pain	36.73% 18	24.49% 12	20.41% 10	4.08% 2	0.00% 0	14.29% 7	49
Headache	16.33% 8	16.33% 8	26.53% 13	2.04% 1	2.04% 1	36.73% 18	49

Please rate how much the yoga program  
you follow has had a positive effect on  
your...

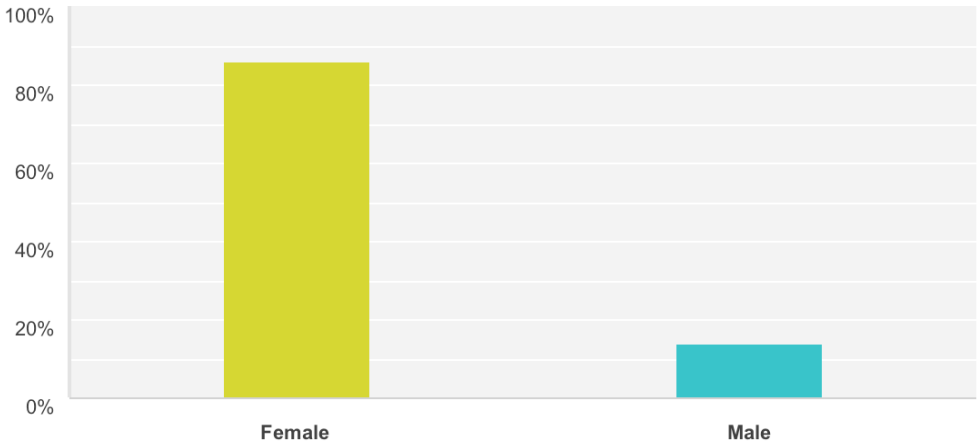
Answered: 57 Skipped: 1



	Extremely	Strongly	A little	Very little	None at all	Total	Weighted Average
working motivation	30.36% 17	39.29% 22	26.79% 15	3.57% 2	0.00% 0	56	2.04
workplace satisfaction	28.57% 16	41.07% 23	21.43% 12	5.36% 3	3.57% 2	56	2.14
work performance	28.57% 16	51.79% 29	19.64% 11	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	56	1.91
physical well-being	68.42% 39	28.07% 16	1.75% 1	1.75% 1	0.00% 0	57	1.37
mental well-being	68.42% 39	24.56% 14	5.26% 3	0.00% 0	1.75% 1	57	1.42

Your gender

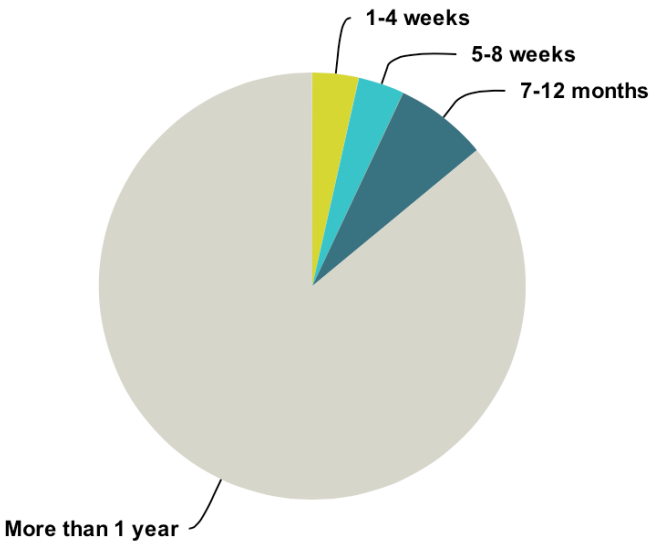
Answered: 58 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Female	86.21% 50
Male	13.79% 8
Total	58

Since when are you practicing yoga/ breathing exercises?

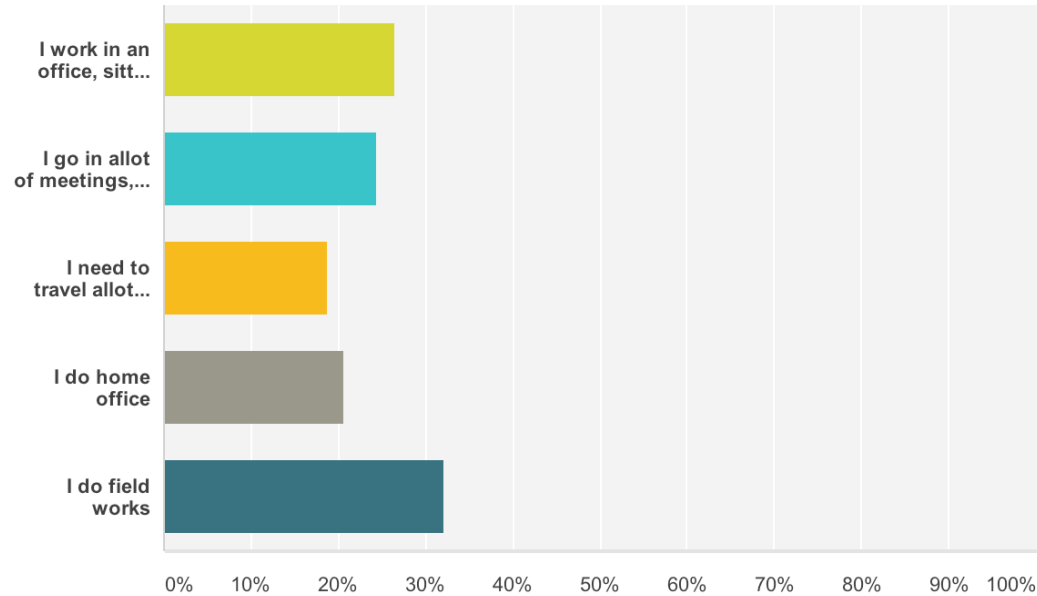
Answered: 57 Skipped: 1



Answer Choices	Responses
1-4 weeks	3.51% 2
5-8 weeks	3.51% 2
9-12 weeks	0.00% 0
3-6 months	0.00% 0
7-12 months	7.02% 4
More than 1 year	85.96% 49
Total	57

What type of workplace do you have?

Answered: 53 Skipped: 5

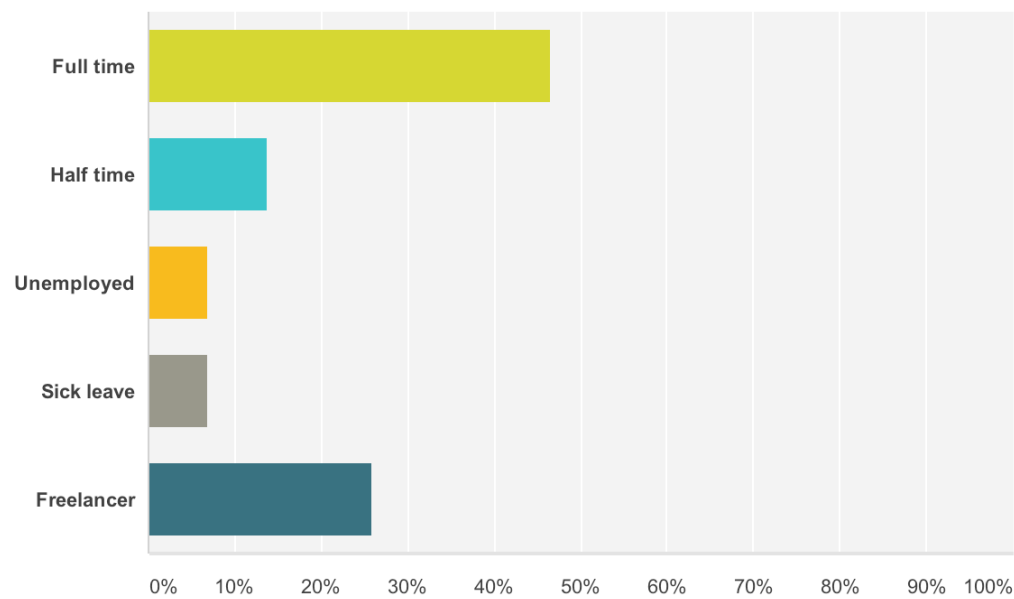


Answer Choices	Responses	
I work in an office, sitting in front of the computer all day	26.42%	14
I go in allot of meetings, also have my own work desk in a company/organization	24.53%	13
I need to travel allot for my work	18.87%	10
I do home office	20.75%	11
I do field works	32.08%	17
Total Respondents: 53		



Your working situation

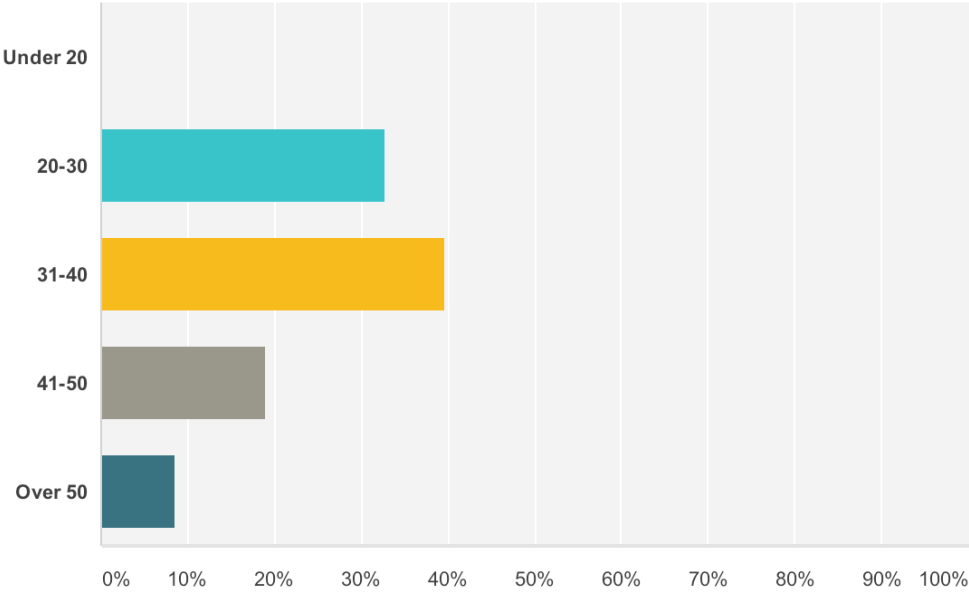
Answered: 58 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Full time	46.55%	27
Half time	13.79%	8
Unemployed	6.90%	4
Sick leave	6.90%	4
Freelancer	25.86%	15
Total	58	

Your age

Answered: 58   Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Under 20	0.00%	0
20-30	32.76%	19
31-40	39.66%	23
41-50	18.97%	11
Over 50	8.62%	5
Total		58

## Statutory Declaration

Hiermit erkläre ich, dass ich die vorliegende Arbeit selbstständig und nur unter Verwendung der angegebenen Literatur und Hilfsmittel angefertigt habe. Stellen, die wörtlich oder sinngemäß aus Quellen entnommen wurden, sind als solche kenntlich gemacht. Diese Arbeit wurde in gleicher oder ähnlicher Form noch keiner anderen Prüfungsbehörde vorgelegt.

Barcelona, 23.06.2015

Henrikke Hammett Havaas

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Ort, Datum

Vorname Nachname